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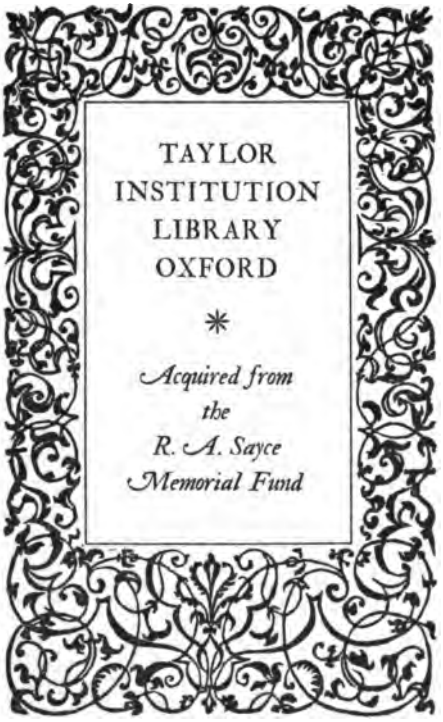

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INTERIOR OF MONTAIGNE'S LIBRARY.

From a Drawing by Henry Wallis.

MONTAIGNE THE ESSAYIST.

A Biography.

BY

BAYLE ST. JOHN.

With Illustrations.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193 PICCADILLY.
1858.

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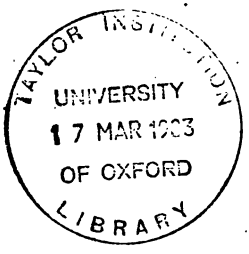

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down to write the war had recommenced against that inconstant, coquettish, impertinent sex, that, leaving domestic duties, and letting their households go adrift, were invading society with their half-learning and incapacity for reason. He was quite in the spirit of his times, therefore, when he spread through his Essays a number of the sharpest sayings he could invent or remember against women.

I have already separated from these sayings what seemed to me allusions to Montaigne's own experiences of love. I find that one biographer has collected many others, referring to what is vulgarly called "the aggravating character" of married women, their tendency to cross and contradict their husbands, to answer "before their anger cools," in order to prove that Demoiselle Françoise de la Chassagne was a sad shrew, who made our philosopher's life unhappy. There seems to me, however, no reason to be melancholy over his matrimonial mischances. We have seen how he married; and it is not serious to talk of "the violence done to his inclinations." But there is really no ground for supposing that in any way Françoise was the plague of Montaigne's life. In the Essays, it is true, there are allusions to scenes of domestic wrath; but these will astonish no one who has seen the interior of any family. He was accustomed, he says, to warn those who had a right to be angry in his house, "first, to be chary of their anger, and not to let it loose without reason: if you always scream no one will attend to you, and 'tis absurd to scold a servant in

the same tone for having badly rinsed a glass or ill set a chair as for committing a theft;—secondly, not to be angry to no purpose, and to take care that their scolding should hit the mark; for usually women scream before the culprit has appeared, and continue screaming a century after he has gone away." This humorous observation was no doubt derived from experience in Montaigne's household, but proves nothing against Françoise except that she had a rapid tongue.

"I have known hundreds of women—and Gascony is famous for such examples—whom you could have sooner forced to bite at red-hot iron than made give up an opinion conceived in anger; and I quite believe the story of the woman who, when she called her husband 'lousy,' and was ducked in the pond on that account, after having lost all power of speech, being brought to the surface made the sign of scratching her head in order to show that she did not mean to give in. . . . Those who have had to treat with obstinate women must have noticed into what fury they fly when silence and coldness are opposed to their agitation, and when we disdain to feed their anger." These allusions we know to have been derived from home experience, for a note has been found written in Montaigne's own handwriting, admitting that for once he has based an Essay on his wife; "an excellent virtuous woman," he says, "but who will not always listen to my advice. The sin is committed, God forgive it to me!" Those who derive inferences from such facts to prove that

Montaigne was unhappy with Françoise, must have a singularly exalted idea of the person he might have married. What woman would have furnished an observer of his character with fewer caustic remarks?

I conceive, then, that all that has been said about Montaigne's *ennui* in his home is ill-founded—at least, if we make Françoise responsible for it. It was after six years of experience of marriage that he determined to shut himself up in his château, with this "frequent storm if not continual tempest of his life." If, after some ten years of solitude, he again felt an inclination to "rub his brain against other brains," if he became morose, discontented, uneasy, we can find ample reason for all this in the approach of old age, in the attacks of disease, in the uncertainty to which his speculations had brought him, the contrast of the stoical maxims he was so fond of parading with his own pettinesses and puerilities; in a word, in the approach of death, for which a man with his temperament, without religion, vainly endeavours to prepare himself. Half the attacks on women which his book contains were aimed in various directions, not all point-blank across the court at Françoise. But if this were not so, what then? What if Montaigne really persuaded himself that he was made miserable by this stormy wife of his? Slight must be the experience of human nature which does not warn us, that nearly all our complaints of others, our accusations of interference with the comfort of our lives,—are the mere unjust exhalations of spleen.

I acquit Françoise de la Chassagne, and send her out of court without a stain on her character.

There is one passage in the Essays which, better than any other, seems to me illustrative of the home-manners of Montaigne—I mean, the one in which he describes himself as playing at cards with his wife and daughter for small sums, as seriously and earnestly as if double doubloons were at stake. Montaigne, though he gave up gambling, seems always to have remained fond of cards. Chess he avoided, because it excited him, and called into play too many passions and faculties, which he preferred reserving for other occasions. He had observed, however, that games of hazard develope also the ferocious part of our nature; and says it was quite common to see people gnaw and swallow cards, and thrust dice down their throats, as a sort of revenge for the loss of their money. But the excitement he found in playing against his wife and daughter, could have in no way resembled this; and we may be quite sure of the fact, that his playing at all shows that he was tolerably comfortable and happy. Dr. Payen seems to believe that Montaigne's wife sometimes acted as his secretary.

At an early period of his marriage Montaigne wrote a letter to his wife, dedicating to her Plutarch's "Letter of Consolation," which was among the works translated by La Boëtie. This letter, it is true, was intended for publication, but its tone is quite natural, and reveals anything but a dissatisfied state of mind:—

"To Mademoiselle de Montaigne, my wife.

"My Wife, you are aware that it will not seem proper for me, as a gentleman, according to the rules of this age, to court and caress you still; for they say that a clever man may take a wife, but to marry her is a fool's act. Let them talk as they please. I stick, for my part, to the simple fashion of the olden time—to which my hair begins to show I belong;—and, in truth, novelty, up to this hour, hath cost so dear to this poor state (and I know not whether the highest bidding has yet taken place), that in everything and everywhere I cease to have anything to do with it. Let us live, you and I, my wife, in the old French way. Now, you may remember how the late Monsieur de la Boëtie, that dear brother and inviolable companion of mine, left me, when he was dying, his papers and his books, which I have counted since then as my most favourite pieces of furniture. I will not stingily make use of them for myself alone, not being deserving of this: so I have desired to communicate them to my friends. And because I have, I think, no more intimate friend than you, I send you the 'Letter of Consolation' of Plutarch to his wife, translated by La Boëtie into French: being much grieved that Fortune has rendered this present so appropriate, as having no child but a daughter, long-expected, after four years of marriage, you have lost it in the second year (or month) of its life. But I leave to Plutarch the task of consoling

you, and of pointing out your duty in this case, begging you to believe him for the love of me; for he will declare my intentions, and what can be said on this subject, much better than I. And now, my wife, I recommend myself much to your good graces, and pray God to keep you.

"From Paris, this tenth day of September, 1570.

"Your good husband,

"MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE."

CHAPTER II.

THE CHILDREN OF MONTAIGNE.

By his wife Montaigne had several children, besides the one mentioned in the letter just quoted; but only one of them passed the period of infancy. He says somewhere, having wound himself up to a pitch of stoical resolution on paper, speaking of the loss of children: "I once said jokingly of some one, that he had cheated Divine Justice, for the violent death of three grown-up children having been sent to him in one day, we must believe as a sharp lash,—he almost received it as a singular favour of Heaven. My character is not so eccentric: but I have lost two or three children at nurse, if not without regret, at least without repining; yet there is scarcely any accident that touches men more to the quick." The expression, "two or three," seems to one critic "odious;" but there is really nothing odious in it. Montaigne is stimulating himself to face the disasters of life. Among these is the loss of children; and, grateful for the one left him, he does not shrink from admitting or boasting

that he had been deprived of two or three very young children without any great despair. His tone is influenced, also, by the comparative lightness of his loss with that to which he refers, and which is elsewhere recorded by him thus: "The Comte de Gurson, the Comte de Fleix, and the Chevalier, three brothers, my good lords and friends of the house of Foix, were killed at Moncrabeau, in the Agenois, in a very fierce conflict in the service of the King of Navarre." These three gentlemen were sons of the Marquis de Trans, whom I have already mentioned.

Whilst defending Montaigne from the absurd charge of barbarity, it would leave a very incomplete conception of his character if we omitted to notice that he expressly disclaims all share in that mysterious affection, that yearning of parent for child, which seems to be the real link of the great chain of humanity. We must not be surprised at this: Montaigne had to do work essentially opposed to what is "supernatural and divine in our nature." He could not "receive" that passion, which makes people embrace children scarcely born, without any movement in their soul, nor recognisable form in their body, by which they may render themselves amiable, and "always objected to let them be nursed in the house." This is probably the reason why they nearly all died. We have the record of each successive disaster. In Montaigne's journal of family events, which was evidently fabricated for himself at a late period of his life,—perhaps all at one

sitting—and is full of the strangest mistakes as to dates, we find the following entries:—

"June 28, 1570, was born of Françoise la Chassagne and me a daughter, whom my mother and the President La Chassagne, father of my wife, named Toinette. This is the first child of my marriage. She died two months after." The same child, in the dedication of La Boëtie's "Letter of Consolation," is said, according to Dr. Payen by a misprint, to have lived two years.

"September 9, 1571. About two hours after midday, Françoise la Chassagne, my wife, brought forth at Montaigne my daughter Léonore, second child of our marriage; which Pierre Eyquem de Montaigne, Sieur de Gaviac, my uncle, and Léonore my sister, baptized."

"July 5, 1573. About five o'clock in the morning was born at Montaigne my third child. M. l'Abbé de Verteil, my wife's uncle, and Mademoiselle de Mons, held her over the font, in the chapel of my house, and named her Anne. She only lived seven weeks."

"December 27, 1574, my fourth daughter was born, and died about three hours afterwards; having been baptized hurriedly, necessity pressing."

"May, 1557, was born my fifth child, who died a month afterwards. My brother, the Sieur de Mattecoulon, and my sister Mary, baptized her without ceremony."

"February 21, 1583, we had another daughter, who was named Marie, and baptized by the Sieur de

Jauvillac, conseiller in the Court of Parliament, her uncle, and my daughter Léonore. She died a few days afterwards."

Elsewhere, writing upon education and against the practice of beating, Montaigne says:—"All my children die at nurse; but Léonore, our only daughter, who has escaped this misfortune, has reached the age of six and more without having been punished, the indulgence of her mother aiding, except in words, and those very gentle ones."

Although Montaigne had little of real parental love, he was just the man to be accessible to the influence of qualities by which children, as they grow up, "render themselves amiable." He gradually became fond of Léonore, as he might have grown fond of the amiable child of any other person,—just as he became fond of the Demoiselle de Gournay, whom he adopted as a sort of intellectual daughter in his after-life. Like Henry the Fourth, he always made her call him papa; and he often patiently sat and listened to her reading to her governess, when she was of a marriageable age."

The occasion on which he mentions this is characteristic. He is complaining that women are brought up to think only of love from their very childhood; their grace, their decking out, their science, their conversation,—all their instruction, has that only in view. Their governesses make no other impression on them, even by continually warning them against it. "My daughter, my only child, is of a marriageable age; but she is of a tardy complexion, slight and soft, and

has been brought up by her mother in a very private and reserved way, so that she is only just beginning to lose the naïveté of childhood. She was reading the other day a French book before me: a word capable of a coarse, double meaning, occurred; her governess instantly stopped her short, rather roughly, and made her skip the passage. I let her alone, not to interfere with their rules, for I don't meddle in that business. Feminine police works in a mysterious way, which we must let alone; but I am very much mistaken if intercourse with twenty lackeys would have been able to impress upon the girl's fancy in six months the intelligence, the use, and all the consequences of the sound of those rascally syllables so completely as did this good old woman by her reprimand and her interdiction!"

Montaigne then goes on to make revelations, which of course apply only to women of his age and country, declaring that the female mind produces coarse and licentious ideas as naturally as trees do fruit; so that he almost accepts Plato's idea, that in a former state of existence they must have been debauched boys. "I once happened," he says, "to overhear them talk without suspicion, and say —— Oh, that I dared to repeat what they said! By Our Lady! thought I, we go and study phrases in Amadis and facts in Boccaccio and Aretino, and fancy we can teach these creatures anything!"

Montaigne professes not only not to regret that he had but one child, but denies that he possessed the common tie which is said to bind men to the future by

the children which bear their name and their honour. To be without offspring seemed to him no defect; yet elsewhere he expresses himself desirous to find a son-in-law who would take care of his affairs and relieve him of their weight. "But we live," he adds, "in a world where loyalty in one's own children even is unknown." We find that he at last met with a son-in-law to suit him, and the history of the marriage is contained in the following four entries in his journal:—

"May 27, 1590, Sunday. Léonore, my only daughter, married François de la Tour, in presence of Bertrand her father, of me and my wife, in this house.

"June 23, Saturday. At the point of day, the heat being extreme, Madame de la Tour, my daughter, left here to be taken to her new home.

"September 5, Wednesday. At nine o'clock at night, died at La Tour the Seigneur de la Tour, father of my son-in-law, aged, as he had told me, seventy-one years.

"March 31, 1591, was born to Madame de la Tour, my daughter, her first child, a daughter, baptized by the Sieur de Saint Michel, her uncle's husband, and by my wife, who named her Françoise de la Tour."

CHAPTER III.

HOUSEHOLD EXPERIENCES.

We have seen by the negative way in which Montaigne represents himself as interfering in his daughter's education, how likely a man he was to hold the reins of his household lightly. He seems to imply, however, that he was obliged to interfere more than he felt inclined, because his wife was not a good woman of business. It was his theory, that women should be educated to look after all household affairs, instead of wasting their time in thoughts of toilette and society. When he was away from home, spending money on travel, he did not find that the expense was in any way diminished. He makes a great virtue of not letting his affairs go to the dogs; tells us that it is as troublesome to govern a family as to govern a kingdom; that as small type wearies the eyes more than large type, so petty cares fatigue the mind more than great cares: but I think he meddled a great deal more in household matters than he will acknowledge. "I cannot avoid," he says, "running up against something at home every

hour that displeases me." How often must he have laid down his pen, with which he was making a pish at chance and sufferance, to look out of the window of his tower and trouble himself to know what was going wrong, what vessel was broken, what pilfering had been discovered! "The pilferings they think they conceal best from me," he notes with a sort of chuckle at his own sagacity, "I know best." He admits that he used to feign to be in a passion in order to govern his house, and probably imitated the vociferations of the voluble Françoise. When he says "feign," those who know the proportions of consciousness and unconsciousness in anger, will understand what he means. It is certain that the multiplicity of petty concerns at home kept this fidgetty philosopher in a continual state of annoyance. The tiles blown off his tower by the wind made him melancholy. He breathed freely when on a visit to a strange house, and was happy there; except, perhaps, when he thought of the disorder that might be in his own.

Montaigne entered late in life on the management of a household, and evidently had little real delight in it, though his love of order made him interfere. "I wish," he says, "that instead of some other piece of his succession my father had left me that passionate love which, in his old age, he had for household affairs." As for himself, during the eighteen years he had been the head of a house, he had never had courage to examine the title-deeds of his estate. His father had prognosticated that he would ruin his fortune, being

too fond of wandering; but, in spite of his easy mode of proceeding, he had rather improved it than otherwise. The fact is, that during the first few years that he was the master of his fortune, he seems to have developed in himself, like Alfieri, a sort of artificial avarice. Afterwards he became much easier and looser in his money transactions.

Montaigne employed about a hundred men upon his estate; and his household seems to have been numerous for a mere country gentleman. In one place he says he could not remember their names, but only those of their offices. His character is developed in his account of the rules he observed in choosing his servants. His choice fell, he says, not on the chaste valet, or on the cook that did not swear, but on the diligent valet and the clever cook. He tells of his gardener, his groom, his valets, and his page. "What the deuce do we care to be informed whether he had a page or not?" cries one of his surly critics. The fact is, that Montaigne mentions this circumstance in the account of an adventure he once met with when he was attacked, and lost men and horses. "Among others," he says, "they miserably killed a page of mine, an Italian gentleman, whom I was carefully bringing up. In him was extinguished a youth of very fine promise." The critics, leaving aside the pathetic part of this reminiscence, hang all their remarks on the word "page." I suppose the same class of writers is indifferent about the information that Montaigne, so severe on his wife's noisy anger, used to fly

into a passion with his people, halloo at them, and call them "calves;" but his anger soon passed. His wrath was oftener roused, pedant that he was, by the bad reasons than by the bad actions of his household. That he was not a comfortable master, is proved by the admission that he knew many servants who would rather beg their bread than serve him. He makes the observation which was, no doubt, the origin of Catinat's bon-mot: "Few men have been admired by their valets-de-chambre." He always speaks of the people he employed as "belonging to him" for the time. "I have a painter," he says; and elsewhere, "I have a good fellow of a tailor, who never uttered a truth in his life, even when it would have been serviceable to him." One of his valets acted as his secretary, and stole a number of pieces chosen out of the Essays. Elsewhere he mentions having in his service a man who had travelled in America, and was sufficiently intelligent to give him much information on the manners of the savages. He talks of a Swiss apothecary kept by his father, a quiet, respectable man, who told droll stories of the effect of imagination on a former master. All these little detached hints give us the idea that his château was very populous, and help to paint the peculiar state of society in those days when civilisation was dispersed, as it were, over the country in little shining globules, not collected in one great central mass.

CHAPTER IV.

NEIGHBOURS AND FRIENDS OF MONTAIGNE.

As the whole valley of the Dordogne was studded with mansions such as Montaigne's, with here and there a vast château belonging to the great lords of the country, he had many neighbours of his own rank in life. His most frequent relations seem to have been with the château De Gurson, belonging to Gaston de Foix, Marquis de Trans, which rises, as I have said, upon a hill in sight of his house to the north. The Essay on the education of children is dedicated to the daughter-in-law of the Marquis, Madame Diane de Foix, Comtesse de Gurson. Her husband was afterwards killed at Moncrabeau. Montaigne had had much to do with bringing about her marriage; and relates that her husband, his intimate friend, came to him on the wedding-day, and said that a rival was present who would certainly cast a charm upon him. An old lady, also a relation, felt much interest in this matter; was in a state of great excitement, and whispered her delicate fears to Montaigne. We know all the details of this

marvellous adventure: how the wedding folks, according to usual custom, entered the bridal chamber some time after the happy pair had retired, in order to bring them the cup of spiced wine; how Jacques Pelletier's amulet was brought into play, and how the enchantments which really took place were defeated. In due time, Montaigne's advice on the bringing up of the first child became necessary. In his Essay, he tells us this Diana was of a lettered race; for there existed books by the ancient Counts of Foix; and François de Candale, her uncle, was still distinguishing himself as a writer. This De Candale was the great patron of science and literature in Guienne. He possessed many châteaux on the banks of the Garonne, and in one of them had laboratories, workshops, and forges set up, in order to indulge his taste for mechanics. He was very fond of relating an ascent he once made of the Jumelles, in the Pyrenees, for the purpose of measuring its height; and he and other learned men seem to have considered it one of the loftiest mountains in the world. As an instance of his sagacity, we are told that, before setting out, he provided himself with a furred gown, whilst the young gentlemen who accompanied him were so ignorant that they started with simple blouses. They did not believe that they could find it too cold anywhere in the month of May. We have already seen that Montaigne dedicated one of La Boëtie's works to another member of this great family, Paul de Foix. He moved, indeed, as a gentleman remarkable for learning and talent, and well-looked upon at court, in

the highest society in the province. When he was conseiller he was intimate with M. d'Escars, the king's lieutenant. He always kept up relations with Montluc, and relates how that able general and vigorous writer, having lost his son in an expedition against the island of Madeira, was seized with remorse for the severity and reserve he had always shown towards him. "He came to me," says Montaigne, "and expressed his sorrow that the poor lad had only seen a stern and contemptuous expression on his countenance—an expression merely assumed, from a mistaken notion of the dignity it was necessary for a father to keep up." The Essay in which this anecdote is related is addressed to Madame d'Estissac, a widow lady of Gascony, who had been left by her husband at the head of a large fortune, which she had to take care of for her son. Montaigne praises her for having refused many honourable offers of marriage, in order to attend entirely to her maternal duties. Young M. d'Estissac afterwards accompanied Montaigne to Italy.

To enumerate all Montaigne's distinguished friends would, however, be to enumerate the most distinguished persons of the day. I refer here principally to his countrymen and neighbours. Among these we must reckon Monsieur de Pibrac, "of agreeable mind, wholesome opinions, and gentle manners," whose death he mentions respectfully; forgetting, of course, to note that this gentle man had apologised for the St. Bartholomew; and refraining from any allusion to his unfortunate, and somewhat humiliating passion, when

the fire of passion should have been quenched, for Marguerite de Valois.

Montaigne had opportunities at court of seeing this Marguerite de Valois, about the time of her marriage with Henry the Fourth; and when she became his neighbour at Nerac, in 1579, determined to dedicate to her his famous "Apology for Raymond de Sebonde." He received permission so to do from the learned princess; who allowed him also to quote as much Latin as he pleased. Something, however, seems to have occurred at the last moment to make him deem it advisable to withdraw her name from the head of the Essay; but here and there the epistolary form is still preserved. Compliments to her beauty are not spared. In another place Montaigne, alluding to the time when he knew her at court, calls her "a maiden, the first of our princesses;" and quotes something she said to him, to the effect that too much learning must stifle the judgment.

Montaigne was constantly visited by learned and literary men in their voyages in Guienne, and received them as hospitably as his character would allow. On one occasion he deliberately omitted the compliment of riding out on the road to meet his guests; and this seems to have given great offence. He retired to his tower and wrote an Essay against the ceremonial part of politeness. He was never a great favourite with the learned class of his time, who did not like the airs of gentility he gave himself. Scaliger called him "a bold ignoramus," and said impertinent things about

him. Tradition explains this by the compliments Montaigne paid to Lipsius, whom he called the most learned man that remained after the death of Turnebus. Lipsius, in return, though usually despising the French writers, called Montaigne the French Thales. But we have better opinions than that of this weak-minded peripatetic philosopher, who changed his religion as often as his abode, and was little worthy of the praise given him. Scaliger, a neighbour of Montaigne's, whose father had admired the verses of La Boëtie, may have been hurt by so misplaced a compliment; but it is more likely that his ire was roused by the affectation of contempt with which Montaigne spoke of the learned class of his day, whom he describes as issuing greasy, filthy, and *morveux*, from a garret where they had not been searching how to make themselves better and wiser, but seeking to discover the measure of the verses of Plautus, or the true orthography of a Latin word—that is, labouring to render study more easy for Montaigne and other ungrateful fine gentlemen.

It is easy to collect ludicrous facts about learned men, much easier and more amusing, than to describe their general simplicity and exemplary behaviour. Montaigne is very strong in such instances. Some of his anecdotes are quite comic. Many of his acquaintances, he says, kept their learning in their libraries; and he knew a man who, when he asked him what he knew, fetched a book to show him, and did not dare to say he had a pimple on his nose without going to his lexicon to study what was a nose and what a pimple.

On one occasion, a friend of his, meeting at Montaigne one of the same kidney, a man of letters and reputation, with a fine flowing gown, opened a dispute with him, and kept it up the whole day in an extempore jargon, interlarded with a few words and phrases that had some reference to the matter supposed to be under examination. This is a touch that recalls the gesticulating dispute carried on between Master Thaumaste, the learned Englishman, and the inimitable Panurge. Elsewhere Montaigne tells an anecdote of a man who launched forth into a Philippic against the vices of the world in talk—and wrote about kitchen and law-reforms.

We have traces of the visits, however, of many really learned men to the château de Montaigne. Turnebus seems to have made one call. Jacques Pelletier, a famous mathematician, poet, and grammarian of those days, used often to come there; and once, taking advantage perhaps of his host's inexact knowledge, boasted that he had found in geometry inevitable demonstrations that subvert the truth of experience: as, for example, that two lines may approach one another which yet to all eternity, however prolonged, could never touch. On another occasion the same wag made him an odd present, namely, a flat piece of gold with some celestial figures engraved on it, intended as an amulet against sun-strokes. It was necessary to fasten it on the top of the head by a ribbon that passed under the chin. Montaigne kept it

by him, and afterwards, as we have seen, turned it to a droll use.

Thus all the meetings of Montaigne with remarkable persons left their trace in his writings. But his Essays are full of anecdotes of his most insignificant friends and neighbours. He intimates that most of the people about him were ignorant and boorish. But from the most ignorant he could learn something, if not by questioning, at any rate by observing them. He has left us a portrait gallery of his country neighbours, which show that some of them were oddities indeed. The humour of the old gentleman who was so attentive to his food and its results, too nearly resembles that described in Matthew Bramble's famous letter from Bath to enable me to quote it. Here is another, which is droll enough:—One of our gentlemen used to wipe his nose with his fingers, "an act very contrary to our custom;" but he obstinately justified his practice. He used to say: "What privilege has this filthy excrement that we should prepare a fine delicate piece of linen to receive it, and then wrap it up carefully and put it in our pocket? It is much more absurd to do so than to throw it away."—Another man, a Dean of St. Hilary, had come through melancholy to love solitude so much, that on Montaigne's first visit he learned that for twenty-two years he had never gone out of his room, and only allowed people to visit him once a-week. Every day a servant brought him his food. He spent his time in reading

and walking about, and thus obstinately remained shut up till he died. Another of Montaigne's friends, a gentleman of good family, was born blind, but had got so accustomed to speak as other people spoke, that when one of his godchildren was presented to him he would say, "Good heavens, what a handsome child! How pleasant it is to see him! What an agreeable countenance!" He would also commonly exclaim: "This is a fine light room; this is a fine sunny day." In that part of the country the common amusements were hunting, tennis, shooting at a mark with the arquebus, and so this poor blind gentleman thought it necessary to interest himself much in these matters. His people used to cry out to him, "A hare! a hare!" and he would give chase, and presently afterwards would say, "Here it is;" and was as proud of his capture as any one else. He must needs play at tennis, too, and fired at the mark with the others, and believed all that was told him of his excellent aim.

Another gentleman in the neighbourhood being marvellously subject to the gout, was pressed by the doctors to leave off altogether the use of salt meat, but always replied pleasantly that he wanted to keep the power of complaining of something, and that by crying out and damning, now the sausage, now the tongue, and then the ham, he felt himself relieved. Thus we see that Montaigne kept a register of the oddities of all his friends, and introduces them to us whenever he can. "I know a lady of very high rank," he says, "who believes that it gives a person a

disagreeable appearance to be seen in the act of chewing, and for this reason will scarcely ever eat in public." This lady would have met with the approval of Byron.

Although Montaigne had many noblemen and gentlemen among his neighbours, we must not suppose that he was, therefore, wrong in saying that he had little intellectual intercourse. The nobles of his day were almost all ignorant; and it was, indeed, considered so essential to the sword to be ignorant, that Montaigne throughout his book, even when he most eloquently insists on education, affects a sort of gentlemanly contempt for learning. We have seen, however, from what we have said of his conversation, that he must have been always rather out of place among the rustics and squires of his neighbourhood. Their chief subject of talk was genealogy. "Yesterday," says Montaigne, in his strange journal, "I saw a man of understanding making fun pleasantly and justly of the absurd habit of another, who bored every one with the register of his genealogies and alliances, more than half false; and yet this very man, if he had observed himself, would have found that he was not less intemperate and troublesome in constantly talking of the high lineage of his wife."

Another time there was a meeting of gentlemen to decide the quarrel of one lord with another, who had, indeed, some prerogatives above the common nobility. "Apropos of these prerogatives, every one, trying to equal him, alleged, some one origin, some another,

some the resemblance of a name; others that of a coat of arms, others an old private parchment, so that it turned out that the least of them was descended from some outlandish king. As they were about to sit down to dinner, one of my friends, instead of taking his place, withdrew with profound reverences, begging all present to excuse him if from rashness he had until then lived with them as a companion, assuring them that, now that he had learned all their old qualities, he should begin to honour them according to their rank, and that it was not proper for him to sit down among so many princes. After carrying on his joke for some time he abused them soundly, saying, 'Let us be content, in God's name, with what contented our fathers, and with what we really are. We are good enough if we know how to maintain our position. Let us not disown the fortune and condition of our ancestors; and away with these stupid imaginations, which every one can bring forward who has only the impudence to do so!'"

But it would be impossible to extract from the Essays all instances of observation on the characters of neighbours and friends, for a principal part of them is composed of such material. Nor need we classify all Montaigne tells us as to his method of conversation with them. No doubt when he did speak he spoke something in the manner of the Essays, where he does not brace himself up and imitate the classical step. He tells us he was not fitted, like some of his friends, to entertain the ears of princes with chat, or a

company with tales; but in animated conversation he produced a powerful effect. Malebranche complains of the contagious influence of his imagination. This was, no doubt, observable as much in his conversation as it is in his writings. He spoke loud and in an eager manner when interested, otherwise he was cold and reserved. He rather made speeches than conversed. He ridiculed the learned language usually employed in conversation, even by women, whom he recommends to eschew it. When he argued he was obstinate and persevering, but he was also full of anecdote and advice, and sentences and sayings. He lays a great deal of stress on his method of argumentation, and, whatever he may say to the contrary, must have been not only a good talker, but a great talker, and, no doubt, had a reputation as such.

CHAPTER V.

LA TOUR DE MONTAIGNE.

In describing the present state of Montaigne's château, I have sketched the great tower overlooking the en-

MONTAIGNE'S TOWER.

trance to the court-yard, which he reserved entirely for his own use, and which was the chief scene of his meditations, his studies, and his writings. It is impossible to dissociate the Essays from that tower. Whoever reads them is at first disposed—overlooking the fact that in every page there is, as it were, a thread connecting it with the busy world—to conceive them as the work of a solitary philosopher, who has purposely isolated himself in order to indulge in fantastical speculations, and make havoc with his own ideas, fancies, prejudices, and hopes. Their popularity arises chiefly perhaps from the impression produced of separation from the times in which they were written. What seems to appeal to no particular time, seems to appeal to all time; and there is, indeed, a universal element in Montaigne's book—the painting of human nature in its most unclothed, unartificial state—which makes it to be appreciated by the man of this day as it was by the man of that. It would have been appreciated thousands of years ago, at the outset of the intellectual development of which it continues the tradition. Plato would have loved and understood it, aye, and Confucius; for, as it belongs in this respect to no time, so it belongs to no country. It is the least French of all books. It begins by an anecdote of the Black Prince, and ends by a quotation from Horace; and there is not a trace of nationality from beginning to end. For, in his tower, Montaigne looked upon all men as his kin. From that look-out the map of the world became a skeleton map, not

blotched with distinctive colours. Costume, hats and turbans, boots and sandals, and breeches and stomachers, were all torn away and thrown aside, and the great infant Man gambolled before his fancy. But his was not the mind to think much of the primitive or the ideal state. The naked man he saw bore the marks of the girths he had worn, and the burdens he had carried.

In order to reach this centre, Montaigne, advanced by two distinct paths that must inevitably intersect. His philosophy was as much the result of reading as of experience. He did not belong to the school which affects to separate the study of men from the study of books,—as if books did not contain the most intimate and completest revelations of man! Montaigne looked at the stage from the slips as well as from the boxes. He knew that the vast and populous spectacle of the Present, with all its colours, its lights and shades, its bustle and confusion, could teach absolutely nothing to him who was too idle or contemptuous to look back and see of what materials similar pictures were made in past times. Every man has experienced, every man sees as much of the world as another; and this is why all pretend to have "a knowledge of human nature." But the world is a pantomime, which cannot be understood without some previous knowledge of what is going on. We must, at least, have a playbill in our hands.

Montaigne was perfectly aware, from the outset, of the importance, for the man who intends to write,

of knowing what has been written before him, and of taking advantage of all previous discoveries and studies; and instead of depending for originality on ignorance, so apt to deal in pompous truisms and commonplaces, sought for new truths and ideas beyond the limits of the known. Learning furnished him with an indispensable ballast, without which he would have rolled about and gone to pieces in the sea of speculation. It is true that, according to the mood he was in, giving in this an instance of how "diverse and undulating" a thing man is, he now affected to work without books, and now pretended that his Essays were a mere patchwork from all sides. Of course neither description is correct. He carried erudition very far, and stopped only just short of pedantry, if he did stop short; and at the same time gave the reins to his imagination to such an extent that we frequently fancy he is playing with his subject and his reader.

We shall, then, acquire a new insight into Montaigne's character, and better understand the Essays, by penetrating once more into the upper story of his tower, and taking a more accurate view of its contents. We already know its plan and present state. In Montaigne's time it was, no doubt, well furnished, according to the fashion of the day. On the rafters were carefully inscribed in black letters verses from the Bible, with Greek and Latin sentences. In Greek there were written the following maxims :—

"*It is not so much things that torment man, as the opinions that he has of things.*" "*Every reasoning has*

its contrary." "Wind swells bladders; opinion swells men."

The Latin inscriptions are:—

"Mud and ashes, what have you to be proud of?" "Our understanding wanders blind amidst darkness, and cannot seize on truth." In large letters on the central rafter is seen this device: "I DO NOT UNDERSTAND. I PAUSE. I EXAMINE." But the chief ornaments of this chamber were the books. The nucleus of the collection was the library of La Boëtie, which he left by will to his friend. Montaigne tells us somewhere that he possessed above a thousand volumes—a great many for those days of folios; and elsewhere, returning to the charge, he says, "My library is one of the finest in any village."

"The form of the room"—he goes on—"is circular, and the only straight piece of wall is where I place my table and my chair. As I sit I can take in at one glance round the curve all my books, ranged on shelves, five ranges one above the other. Three windows give me three wide and rich views over the country. The room is sixteen paces in diameter. In winter I am less continually there, for my house is perched on a hill, as its name imports, and none of its rooms is so exposed to the wind as this one. Yet it pleases me because it is somewhat difficult of access, and retired, as much on account of the utility of the exercise, as because I there avoid the crowd. Here is my seat, my place, my rest. I try to make it purely my own, and to free this single corner from conjugal, filial, and

civil community. Elsewhere I have but a verbal authority, merely essential and confused. Wretched is he, who in his own home has really no home of his own, where he can pay court to himself and hide himself when he pleases! Ambition must recompense its followers well to induce them to remain ever in view, like the statue in a market-place. *Magna servitus est magna fortuna!* They have not even their wardrobe for retreat. Verily, I would rather be ever alone than never alone."

We must observe, however, that when Montaigne retired to his Library, he was not always necessarily alone. "I turn over the leaves now of one book," he says, "now of another, without order or design, disconnectedly. Sometimes I meditate, sometimes I sit down, or dictate as I walk about these dreams" (his Essays). As we have already seen, Montaigne employed one of his servants as secretary. It is difficult, however, to understand how any part of the Essays could have been dictated. They are so personal! Elsewhere Montaigne says, that though he wrote an insupportably bad hand, he preferred writing his private letters to dictating them.

Montaigne made it, as it were, a business to think at his castle. He was ever on the look-out for ideas and images. A thought would suddenly strike him in the family part of his house, and he would often, not having his tablets at hand, hurry across the court and climb his tower, in order to set it down. Experience, however, had taught him that the thought might be

lost on the way, whisked out of sight, by some sudden gust of sensation; so he used to take care before setting out to tell it to his wife, his daughter, or anybody else who might happen to be at hand. Imagine a gaping servant-girl of Perigord being entrusted with such valuable deposits! What an amusing revelation is there in all this of Montaigne in his literary character—Montaigne the maker of books. His Essays were never out of his mind! He seems ever to have been employed in meditating and carefully inscribing his thoughts in his brain, so that his manner of speaking to others was constrained, dry, and brief. He hastened back, as it were, to his own thoughts, for fear he should lose sight of them.

Montaigne sometimes passed the night in his tower, sleeping in the room on the first floor just under his library. He mentions that he was often annoyed as he wrote by the falling of slates, and says that he would feel less the fall of a tower absent. We can imagine him awakening from his philosophical speculations, laying down his pen, throwing away a half-finished Essay, and beginning to fret and fume about the dilapidated state of his house, calculating the cost of repairs, cursing the expense, and regretting that he had not inherited the constructive mania of his father. Perhaps, for a day after, he would be in a state of nervous excitement; as when the bridle of his horse got out of order, or a small strap flapped insolently against his leg. Another time the chimney would smoke, or a drain stink, in spite of the care he had

taken to have them set to rights as soon as he became master of Montaigne. At other times, the horrible howlings of a tempest made him shiver with terror at the idea of being exposed out in the country. He evidently kept his imagination in an excited state, the peculiar advantages of which none perhaps but a literary man can appreciate.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT BOOKS WERE CONTAINED IN MONTAIGNE'S LIBRARY.

We have not got a complete list of all the thousand volumes which filled Montaigne's shelves. If we had, the collection would probably appear strange enough. But we must remember, in order to understand his choice and his preferences, that, with the exception of Italy, no country, whatever antiquarians and enthusiasts may say, had produced what could be called a literature in modern times. At any rate, the masterpieces of France, England, and Germany, existing in 1571, when Montaigne retired to his tower, may be counted on the fingers of one hand:—Rabelais, Calvin, Luther, Sir Thomas More, Chaucer. What more? How few of the names which come trippingly to the tongue when we talk of the genius of modern times! The joints of the printing-press had indeed, so to speak, only just begun to move easily. In the sixteenth century, printing, instead of being merely a trade, was so new and wonderful as to be considered a learned and most responsible profession. Some of

the ablest minds attended to it. The "Great Turnebus," and the Estiennes of illustrious origin, took to it with enthusiasm. The Estiennes, known, after the manner of kings, as Henry the First, Henry the Second, and so forth, made an immense reputation. The first began to print before the eddies of classical revival had reached France. Within twenty years, however, he brought out above one hundred and twenty works. By degrees, the duties of the printer became more important and more dangerous. As soon as the Reform spread, new editions of the Scriptures began to be demanded, and printers were at the same time theologians and critics. Their adventures and tribulations form some of the most moving and interesting episodes of the history of those times.

It is probable that Montaigne bought almost all the good editions of classical works that appeared. He was an indefatigable reader, or rather skimmer through of books. We are accustomed to hear him spoken of, on the hint given by himself, as a compiler from Plutarch and Seneca—an improver on their maxims; but he ransacked all classical literature for gems of thought, and generally used them in so new and startling a manner, that the original owners would no more have thought of claiming them than so many separate words. In Montaigne they become words of vast extent and complete meaning, in which he clothes his speculations. In his first book alone there are quotations from above sixty Greek and Latin writers. Sometimes mere quotations are concealed in the text, though they may be

discovered, as Montaigne too modestly says, by any one of judgment, as "flowers too rich for such a field." To the general reader he offers them as traps, or rather as checks "on the temerity of those hasty judgments which are passed on all sorts of writings, especially of living persons who use the vernacular." He warns people that they may give a fillip to Plutarch on Montaigne's nose; and in that time, to speak ill of an ancient was almost sacrilege; at any rate, great ingratitude: for the ancients had taught them all they knew, waked them up, set them on their feet, and prepared them for fresh discoveries. As for order, Montaigne pretends to have none. Chance decides the arrangement of his ideas: they sometimes come in crowds, sometimes one by one. As they come, he sets them down. For his object is to paint himself under his various aspects; and he is too tender of his reputation to endeavour, like some more modern Essayists, always to be epigrammatic and startling.

In reading books, Montaigne says that if he met any difficulty he did not bite his nails over it, but after one or two attempts passed on. If one book wearied him, he threw it aside. He never obstinately fixed his attention when it was disposed to wander. He only read at hours when the weariness of doing nothing seized him. "I rarely use modern books," he says, "because the ancients seem to me fuller and loftier; nor Greek books, because I never sufficiently mastered the language." His principal reading, then, was of Latin, and of some few translations of the best

Greeks. His dear Plutarch he principally read in Amyot; and it is curious to notice that the date of the publication of the "Moral Works" (1572), from which he chiefly drew, coincided almost exactly with the commencement of the Essays. "The books I chiefly use to form my opinions," he says, "are Plutarch, since he has become French, and Seneca." He considered Amyot best among the writers of his day.

But it will be interesting to examine Montaigne more closely as a literary man, forming and expressing a judgment on the works of others. We shall thus make better acquaintance with his library, and be able to trace his speculations to their origin. In his "Essay on Books," which is a criticism of the contents of his shelves, he begins by speaking of productions "simply agreeable;" and oddly enough mentions, among the moderns, only the "Decameron" of Boccaccio; Rabelais, and the "Kisses" of Johannes Secundus! Montaigne, though a contemporary of Rabelais, had no suspicion of his character; perhaps regarded him not, with Carlyle, as "a fervid Genius in the mask of a Buffoon;" but, with Verdier, as "the great Mocker of God and of the World." Elsewhere Montaigne mentions the "Heptameron" of the Queen of Navarre; and alludes also to the works of Aretino, severely blaming the Italians for applying the title of Divine to such a writer, who, except for the ingenious but fantastical and far-fetched points with which he was filled, had no pre-eminence over the authors of his age. It is to be observed, that Aretino was the first man in modern times who printed

his letters. He set the fashion in Italy; and Montaigne had, he says, about a hundred different volumes of works of that kind. He preferred those of Annibalo Caro, first published in 1572, and still considered models of Italian prose. Montaigne evidently read all his contemporaries whose works made any noise; but seems to have had a very contemptuous opinion, not ill-founded, of the prose writers of France. He describes how he looked through one book, and the startling effect which a fine but stolen passage had on him. When he came to it and left it, it was like going up and down a precipice.

We have already seen that, even in his youth, Montaigne had an aversion to the Amadis, and that sort of writing; in other words, to sentimental romance; and he notes that this distaste ever continued. When he wrote the Essays, however, this annex of modern literature had gone for a moment out of fashion. People cared more about pamphlets. For his part, as he grew old he grew more fastidious in poetry. Not only Ariosto but Ovid ceased to please him. It is worth noting, however, that he had a partiality for the Centos, so popular in his day,—poems composed of lines and phrases of other poems twisted from their original meaning, as had been the verses of Virgil by Ausonius; and mentions with approval the efforts in this line of Lellius Capilupus, whose cento on the monks is said by Bayle to be inimitable. But he speaks with contempt of poets who wrote whole works, every line of which began with the same letter; and actually

ventures to disdain those Greeks, who, by shortening or lengthening their verses, made their poems represent eggs, balls, wings, or hatchets!

In poetry Montaigne gave the first rank to Virgil, Lucretius, Catullus, and Horace. He considered the "Georgics" of Virgil the most accomplished work of poetry, and regretted that the author had not had leisure to brush up some of the passages of the "Æneid." The fifth book of the "Æneid" seemed to him the most perfect. In the times neighbouring to Virgil's, people complained of the comparison of Lucretius with him. "What would they have said," exclaims Montaigne, "to the absurdity and barbarous stupidity of those who now compare Ariosto with Virgil? What would Ariosto himself have said? Compare the 'Æneid' and the 'Orlando Furioso:'—the former wings rapidly along with a lofty and firm flight, straight to its object; the latter flutters and hops from story to story, as from branch to branch, trusting to its wings for only a short space, alighting at every moment for fear that breath and strength may fail." I register these opinions of Montaigne without discussing them.

He liked Lucan more for his opinions than his style; and was charmed with the good Terence, whom he could never read without discovering some new beauty and grace. He notices, by the way, that in his time those who meddled with comedy-writing—as, for example, the Italians, who were pretty successful—employed three or four plots of Terence or Plautus to make one; or in a single comedy heaped up five or six

stories of Boccaccio. "They have nothing of their own to say, and so try to amuse us with the intrigue. But in my author (Terence) it is just the contrary: the perfection and beauties of his style check our appetite for the story. His sweetness and elegance make us linger everywhere." Montaigne notes that the good ancient poets avoided affectation and research, not only after the fantastical Spanish and Petrarchal elevations, but even gentler and more moderate points, such as are the ornament of later poetical writings. He compares the equal polish, the perpetual sweetness, and flowing beauty of Catullus, with the stings stuck in the tails of Martial's "Epigrams." His comparisons illustrate the manners of his time. "The best writers," he says, "can laugh without tickling themselves; but others, as soul fails them, make up for its want by body." They reminded him of the balls of humbler people, where the dancers, unable to imitate the carriage and decency of the nobility, sought to attract notice by furious leaps and mountebank contortions. He had seen excellent actors in their every-day dress, and with their ordinary countenance, give all the pleasure that their art could afford; whilst beginners and men of less talent were obliged to put flour on their faces, disguise themselves, and make savage grimaces to raise laughter.

Monsieur Villemain, noticing the "Essay on Books," has already spoken with admiration of Montaigne, as the great critic of the sixteenth century. It would be worth while, therefore, to group his opinions on literary

matters, even if, by so doing, we did not in some respect become acquainted with the growth of his mind. He always laid great stress on poetry, and makes many just remarks thereon; as have many other critics who have failed as poets. "Just as the voice constrained in the narrow channel of a trumpet bursts forth more sharply and strongly, so it seems to me that a sentence pressed down by the numerous feet of poetry leaps forward more suddenly, and strikes with a more lively shock."—"I am not of those who think that good rhythm makes good poetry. Let him (the poet) lengthen a short syllable if he pleases—we are in 'Liberty Hall;' if his invention smiles, if wit and judgment have done their duty, he is a good poet, I will say, but a bad versifier." From Montaigne's earliest youth, poetry had the power to pierce and transport him; but his taste had varied from the best of one class to the best of another. First, he liked a gay and ingenious fluidity; then a sharp and elevated subtlety; then a ripe and constant force:—first Ovid, then Lucan, then Virgil. He notes, indeed, with surprise, that in his manhood he no longer cared for Ariosto and Ovid; but preserved always a certain respect for the "Fables" of Esop.

We see, then, that Montaigne's judgment was sure when he criticised the ancient poets. It was naturally less so when he came to speak of the moderns. But his opinion is worth having. "I think," he says, "that Latin poetry has had its vogue in this age. We have abundance of good artisans in

that trade,—D'Aurat, Bèze, Buchanan, L'Hospital, Montdoré, Turnebus. As to French poetry, I think we have carried it to as high a degree as it will ever reach; and in the parts in which Ronsard and Du Bellay excel, I find them little removed from ancient perfection."

Perhaps Montaigne was not far wrong in thinking that French poetry, in as far as language was concerned—I mean, in as far as poetry depends on the assistance of a special vocabulary—could not be carried further than it was carried in his day. For my part, I conceive that the great service rendered by Malherbe and his successors to French literature was to prove that the language was really incapable of cadenced and verbal poetry, and to warn men of genius that if they attempted to produce anything save rhymed prose, they would lose their time. Montaigne, by the way, "wishes to God" that the printers and publishers of his age would write over their doors a warning to mediocre poets not to approach; "because," as he says, "a man is free to be a fool anywhere else, but not in poetry." He knew a poet to whom the clever and the weak, in crowds and in private, nay, to whom heaven and earth, cried out that he had no vocation. Not for all this would he abate one jot of his self-approval. He ever recommenced, ever consulted his friends, ever persisted; and passed his wretched days in producing wretched rhymes. Montaigne had no real tenderness, or he would not have brushed by this man without a kind word. There

is nothing so hateful as the ferocious criticism, in which some indulge, of singing-birds, young or old. Every man who writes poetry must be capable of appreciating poetry. If he endeavour to do what he admires, why should he be broken on a wheel?

However, Montaigne was a greater reader of poetry, and derived much literary fruit therefrom. He was the first, it is said, to use the expression "popular poetry," and to point out the simplicity and the graces by which it resembled the principal beauty of poetry, perfect according to art. He quotes as an example the Villanelles of Gascony, and the songs, specimens of which had been brought from nations who knew no science, and were ignorant even of the art of writing. Montaigne gives specimens of these songs, which he had obtained from his servant, who had been in America, and whose information he used in preference to that contained in the cosmographies.

Montaigne's constant and special studies of poetry explain, in a great measure, the figured style of the Essays. It is customary to admit that he collected sentences and facts with great care, but to imply that, so far as expression goes, he had as it were a well-spring of them within himself, from which they rose with inexhaustible abundance. This is not the case with Montaigne, as it has not been the case with any great writer. We have the note-books of some that seem the most spontaneous; and it has always been found that a large proportion of thoughts, and ideas, and forms, have been either laboriously worked out

from some obscure hint, derived from observation or found by anxious meditation, or more frequently improved from the less perfect expressions of others. Montaigne, like Shakspeare, and Butler, and Milton, owed debts, even in matters that appear most personal, on every side. Not only classical, but Italian and French poetry, furnished him with colours, which he used without scruple. There have been earnest, self-sacrificing men, who have disdained this process, fancying that they were bound to get their silk out of their own entrails, and that mulberry-trees were made for nothing. But it has been followed by all great national writers, and it is necessary to point out that it was followed especially by Montaigne.

The Essayist read poetry, he says, for pleasure only; but other books for intellectual profit, too, as Plutarch and Seneca. Both these Moralists had that notable convenience for him, that they wrote in a broken manner, and did not require any obstinate reading. The "Opuscules" of Plutarch, and the "Epistles" of Seneca, he considered the finest and most profitable part of their writings. Their instruction is the cream of philosophy, and is presented in a simple and pertinent fashion. Plutarch is more uniform and constant; Seneca more undulating and diverse. This one troubles himself, and makes violent efforts, to arm virtue against weakness, fear, and the vicious appetites. The other seems not to estimate the danger so greatly, and disdains to hurry his step and take up a posture of defence. Plutarch has Platonic opinions, gentle and

accommodated to Civil Society; the other has Stoical and Epicurean opinions, further removed from common use, but in Montaigne's opinion more adapted to private use, and firmer. "It appears in Seneca, that he gives way a little to the tyranny of the emperors of his time (for I hold it as certain that it was by a forced judgment that he condemned the cause of those generous murderers of Cæsar), whilst Plutarch is free everywhere. Seneca is full of points and sallies; Plutarch of things. The former warms us and moves us more; the latter gives more content, and repays us best. He leads, whilst the other pushes." Elsewhere Montaigne says that his Essays are built up with the spoils of Plutarch and Seneca. Never was author so scrupulous in acknowledging his general obligations to others as Montaigne. Indeed he far exaggerates them. He rarely, however, gives references, and sometimes melts extracts so completely into his own speculations that we are not aware they are not original. Writers have been accused of plagiarising the Essays, who have merely imitated the ancients.

Cicero's philosophic works pleased Montaigne best, but he was bold enough to say—and in that age of classical superstition this was bold indeed—"Cicero's style of writing seems to me tiresome; his matter is stifled by his long rhetorical preparations. I know what death and volupty are, and do not want him to anatomise them. What I want is reasons by which I may sustain their attack. What is the use of crying 'Oyez, Oyez,' fifty times, like our heralds?" Even

Plato's "Dialogues," to Montaigne, who could not appreciate their Attic style, and was always impatient, looking only, as it were, for the facts of philosophy, appeared very wearisome. We need not be surprised, therefore, that the preparatory flourishes of the Roman orator were unpleasant. The letters to Atticus being, to a certain extent, biographical, were agreeable to Montaigne, "who had a singular curiosity to know the minds and the spontaneous judgments of his authors."

It may be imagined that history was a favourite reading of Montaigne. In it "man in general, of whom he sought the knowledge, appeared more living and complete than elsewhere." But the part of history which he preferred was biography. Plutarch was his man; and he would have liked a dozen such writers as Laertius. He was as anxious to know the lives and fortunes of philosophers, those great preceptors of the world, as "the diversity of their dogmas and phantasies." In this department of study, he thought that all authors, ancient and modern, whatever jargon they used, ought to be consulted. He expected historians either to be very simple or very excellent—very simple, like Froissart, who related without criticism, was not ashamed to correct in one place what he had misstated in another, and thus even represented the diversity of the reports current, and the diverse interpretations made;—or very excellent, by men capable of judging the events related, and of penetrating by the force of their intellect through the outward crust of events, finding out the springs of action, and laying

them bare: but these he thought were very few. He mentions Macchiavelli, but rather as the author of the "Prince" than of the history of Florence; and evidently assumes the common opinion as to the intention of that writer. Reasonably so. The astute Florentine may have meant the "Prince" as a satire; but his work was at once adopted as the handbook of tyrants, and reprobated by all friends of liberty. If he was misunderstood, it was his own fault; and he was guilty of one of the greatest literary blunders ever committed.

Montaigne, in his Third Book, tells us that, against his custom when younger of sitting scarcely an hour at each book, he had just read right through, at once, the "History" of Tacitus, at the recommendation of a gentleman "whom France esteemed greatly, as much for his own value as for that of his brothers." He calls Tacitus a nursery of ethical and political discourses; and it was natural to expect him to admire so sententious a writer. "His lessons," says Montaigne, "are good for troubled and diseased states like ours; it seems that he paints us and pinches us." Montaigne blames Tacitus for not speaking more boldly of himself. His whole criticism is acute and striking. But Cæsar's "Commentaries," the favourite book of Strozzi, was the Latin history which Montaigne placed highest, an opinion in which I discern the traces of some military pedantry. However, his admiration of the literary merits of Cæsar does not prevent him from calling him "a brigand," for having trampled the liberties of his country underfoot. "I have read in

Titus Livius," says Montaigne, "a hundred things that others have not read; and Plutarch probably read a hundred things more—even more than the author meant."

Montaigne used often to take up as new a book which he had some years before covered with notes. He absolutely forgot its contents, he says, and what he had thought of them. On this account he adopted a plan of writing at the end of each book he read, without intending to do so again, the date at which he finished it, and the opinion he had formed. Some of these criticisms he has preserved; as for example, those on Guicciardini, Philippe de Commines, and Du Bellay the memoir-writer. Specimens of autograph notes of this kind exist in the possession of the Duc d'Aumale.

As I have said, Montaigne read the literature of his day constantly, though he admired little save the productions of the new erudite school of poets. He read in order to keep pace with opinion and doctrine—the chief matter of his criticisms. "I was turning over two Scotch books, for and against monarchy," says he in one place. He read Bodin, quotes him, and evidently held him in unusual respect. Whilst refuting some of his criticisms on Plutarch, he calls him "a good author of our time, accompanied with much more judgment than the rabble of scribblers of his age, a man meriting to be judged and considered." Bodin was a type of the class of writers, always so popular, which makes general statements of contemporary facts and admissions of contemporary necessities, and fancies

it has produced a theory. Montaigne's references to contemporaries, however, are generally disrespectful. He ridicules certain writers who exercise their ingenuity in discovering petty causes for the great actions of antiquity, and, indeed, of all time. Voltaire's system of writing history would have been inexpressibly distasteful to him. He mentions a learned writer of his day, a Parisian, to boot, who wrote to advise women who had been outraged to refrain from committing suicide; and regrets that he had not had an opportunity of telling him a bon-mot of a Toulouse woman, which he had heard, and which, by the way, Brantome afterwards appropriated.

The truth is, that when Montaigne formed his literary tastes, French literature, despite the innumerable titles of books that can be disinterred, was composed almost entirely of memoirs, commentaries, pamphlets, and bad poetry. The only remarkable literary fact—except the appearance of Rabelais, who was scarcely recognised, and Calvin, whose reputation as a writer has been made since—was the foundation of the school of Erudites, so interesting from their furious studies of antiquity, and their determination to know what the human mind had produced already, before producing again at the risk of gratuitous labour. Naturally, erudition led to its exaggeration pedantry at first. Young writers always overwhelm us with the knowledge they are acquiring as they write; and every new book they read leaves deposits in the interstices of their style. Montaigne, in literary taste, was far in

advance of his age; and though he extravagantly admired Ronsard, in reality began the reaction in the whole field of literature, afterwards carried out in part by Malherbe,— then a young gentleman writing epigrams, about the time of the appearance of the Essays, with so many other pedants, on the Flea that invaded Mademoiselle Desroches' bosom.

Montaigne, however, was unjust to the pedants. When he wrote, for some half a century France had been occupied in studying the newly-discovered classical literature, and learning that the ancients were not answerable for that crabbed doctrine which, under the name of Aristotelism, had formed their intellectual food for ages. In the absence of grammars, dictionaries, translations, or correct copies of the ancients, whom people had a fierce eagerness to read,— because, with few exceptions, native books were mere rubbish,— all men with literary taste and appreciation passed their time in studying and commenting the ancients. They mistook often their own intense pleasure and admiration for genius, and wrote; but they wrote generally about the objects of their love, and with a sort of unconscious modesty, preferring quoting to criticising. Thus they made books that are unreadable now; and were unreadable by fastidious scholars such as Montaigne even then. But it was they civilized Europe.

CHAPTER VII.

ORIGIN OF THE ESSAYS.

WITHOUT referring to Montaigne's self-alleged want of memory, M. Villemain somewhere says, "His inexhaustible memory placed at his disposal all that men ever thought." This is, perhaps, an exaggeration; but we may certainly reject much of what Montaigne states as to the failures of his memory, without accusing him of want of sincerity. Whenever he happened to forget anything, especially towards the latter part of his life, he complained, as old men will, that he remembered nothing. He sometimes forgot where he had hidden his purse, and at once began to fear that he was tiring his readers by repeating himself. The people of his neighbourhood identified memory with judgment; and he himself says, that to lose memory would be to lose all the faculties of the mind. In reality, a vast memory is an essential part of the definition of a wide capacity of mind. What is a vast mind with nothing in it? Nothing. The size of the

mind is determined by what it contains. Very likely these constant references to want of memory in Montaigne were a sort of coquetry, intended to suggest originality to vulgar readers.

I may as well here describe what may be called the material nature of the Essays, into the construction of which, and their tendency, we are now about to examine. The Essays consist, in their present state, of three books, each containing a certain number of chapters, entirely disconnected one with the other. The most important in length is the twelfth chapter of the Second Book, known as the "Apology for Raymond de Sebonde;" but, in general, the longer Essays are to be found towards the end. The first book contains fifty-seven, the second thirty-seven, and the third only thirteen Essays. Montaigne explains somewhere why he lengthened his chapters as he went on. The real reason, however, was probably that he wrote them with more preparation, and constructed their plan beforehand; although he never desisted from his habit of digression, apparently without cause. Many of the Essays consist simply of an anecdote, or two or three anecdotes, from ancient or modern history; but principally from ancient history, with consequences deduced more or less directly therefrom. At other times, but rarely, Montaigne treats a subject completely; as in the "Apology," the "Essay on Friendship," and the "Essay on Education." Sometimes he professes to treat of one subject, and treats of another. His attack

on miracles is contained in an "Essay on Lame People," and so on. In the first edition of the Essays, comprising only two books, there was much more sequence than now appears. Montaigne added and added sentences and paragraphs without number, but scarcely ever altered what he had already printed. Nearly all the quotations from Latin poets were added after the first edition. It cannot be denied that this process has often obscured his meaning and injured his literary fame.

As we know with what kind of books Montaigne's library was furnished, we may imagine him, if we please,—with the piece of glass he talks of laid, according to his habit, on the page to deaden its whiteness; but "never with spectacles"—engaged in the search after knowledge. As poetry furnished him with forms and expressions which he unhesitatingly adopted, so the philosophers, moralists, and historians, all the mute teachers who surrounded him, furnished him with ideas which he used as postulates or principles, and by means of which he carried on the work of speculation. He rarely read a book from beginning to end, but preferred fluttering the leaves under his hand and allowing his attention to rest here and there. He cared not where he got his quotations—at first or second-hand—and with pleasant self-sufficiency says: "I have but to stretch out my hand and take down a dozen books, consisting of extracts strung together, if I want to give an appearance of reading to this 'Essay on Physio-

gnomy.' A single German preface would supply me with a store of learning." The Germans had the same reputation then as now.

Afterwards Montaigne laughs at the book-wrights who in his days made up their works of little quotations; and tells us that authors used to beg for references and extracts amongst their learned friends, and make a fagot of them and be satisfied. "The ink and paper at any rate are theirs." In this way they taught the public, "not that they knew how to make a book, but that they did not know." Montaigne finishes this little picture of the compilers of his day by mentioning that he once heard a President boast that he had made above two hundred citations in a single decree. For his part he rarely failed, he says, to give a new turn to what he quoted. "We Naturalists," as he singularly continues, "believe that there is an incomparable distance between the honour of invention and the honour of allegation." By Naturalist, he means learned in human nature; and perhaps, from his avoidance of scientific terms, he was supposed by his friends not to merit this title. He begins his "Essay on Fear" thus: "I am not a good Naturalist, they say; and indeed scarcely know by what springs fear acts in us."

There seems no subject connected with pure literature on which so much variety of opinion exists as on this of invention. The paradox that there is nothing in the mind but what is introduced there from without, and yet that, do what you will, you never

can add to a man's power and capacity, is difficult of digestion by most. Few persons agree even on the definition of invention,—perhaps because few bring to the discussion of critical questions any philosophical knowledge of the relations of man to the world of fact. Does invention consist in finding out truths and forms, or in creating something that never existed before? Is there such a thing as spontaneous birth, or fructification without seed? Many decide the question peremptorily, and are all for spontaneous production and creation; have no mercy on any man who, as they express it, "steals a thought;" read poetry in the spirit of a detective, and think that critics should be a sort of literary thief-takers, ever on the watch for plagiarism. This shows that they believe each thought is a separate entity, like a pearl or a guinea in a purse, —not part of one great whole; not a colour, or form, or flash of light, or vibration communicated from the moral universe. These are they who overwhelm bookmen with their compassionate contempt, and reserve their chief admiration for people who seem to say things that have never been said before. Montaigne was not of this class. No man had more contempt for compilers, for men who were proud of "alleging the thoughts of others;" but no man more than he made use of the labours of his predecessors. He was afraid, if he did not read, that with infinite labour and thought he might contrive at last to say just what another had said before him. He absorbed all past knowledge, and when he knew what had been done

and said, tried to say and do something more,—that is, carried on the work of human reasoning. In order to do this, he felt it to be necessary to avoid, above all things, the persevering search after originality. Having conceived his general plan, the theory he wanted to establish, or the duty to enforce, he tried, not to say something of his own, in his own way, but to say something apt, whether it was an old idea in a new dress, or a new idea in an old dress. All great national writers have followed the same method, and it is idle to discuss whether they are more commendable for what they have created or for what they have borrowed. If they had not borrowed they would never have had leisure to create. With the exception, too, of a few fierce minds, working in narrow limits, and spinning out, as it were, their own entrails, all writers who seek originality in the avoidance of models clearly and honestly placed before them, arrive at commonplace by imitating their own vague reminiscences, and solemnly repeating the truisms that are floating about in society. See how surely Montaigne proceeds when he undertakes to develope some moral idea! He knows who have said the best things on the subject. He turns to their pages, reads them over and over again, and, perfectly certain that his mind is not enslaved by theirs, makes use of their knowledge as they had made use of the knowledge of their predecessors; gives, perhaps, a touch here, and adds a tint there, and sometimes, having done no more than this, appeals to the judgment of the judi-

cious whether he has not worked well; and cares nothing for the minute critic who follows him with a cry of "Stop thief!"

Montaigne, then, was essentially a reader; and this is why I have thought it necessary to describe his library so carefully before coming to the history of the composition of the Essays. The idea of those Essays did not occur to him at first. He was wealthy, and in as high a position as he chose to aim at, and therefore really studied to improve his mind without at first any intention to address the world. He was led to write partly by the love of fame, which he affected so much to despise; partly by the mere superabundance of thoughts, that filled his mind as soon as it was withdrawn from the bustle of the world; and partly, perhaps, in truth, as he once pretends, by sheer melancholy—though this, I suspect, was a special cause of industry at particular moments, not a primary cause. The silence of his château was so great, contrasting with the noise of the Court, that he heard his own heart beat, and listened to it, and was led to study "how strangely and wonderfully we are made."

"Recently," he says in an early Essay, "when I retired to my house, resolved, as far as I could, to meddle with nothing, and seek only to pass in repose and apart the little that remained to me of life, I thought I could not do a greater favour to my mind than leave it in complete idleness, to stay at home and converse with itself—the which I hoped it would for the future be able more easily to do, inasmuch as with

time it had become weightier and riper; but I find that, on the contrary, like a runaway horse, it works a hundred times faster on its own account than it did for others, and gives birth to so many chimeras and fantastical monsters, one after the other, without sequence or purpose, that, in order to contemplate at my ease their absurdity and strangeness, I have begun to set them down, hoping that in time my said mind will be ashamed of its folly."

This little narrative, of course, must be accepted with some restriction, and, indeed, may be taken rather as a precautionary excuse for the boldness of certain ideas. But we may easily suppose that the first rough note of an Essay was thrown upon paper some evening when Montaigne, finding his worldly prejudices settling down, as it were, discovered that there was something else in his mind. The first time he exercised his critical power independently, and laid aside the formula with which all minds were so plentifully furnished in that age, must have been, as it were, a revelation to him. We have no reason to suppose that the first Essay now published was the first Essay written. Who knows? Montaigne, looking over his dedications of La Boëtie, may have been struck by the tyrannical manner in which he had himself defended the love of posthumous fame, a sentiment entirely of Pagan origin; and observing that, in spite of his efforts to thrust it aside, the veil of forgetfulness was inexorably descending over the head of his friend, and threatening to muffle it for ever, may, half in earnest, half in sport,

have sought for reasons of consolation. This would account for the "Essay on Glory," in which Tasso is quoted describing Fame as —

"Un' eco, un sogno, anzi del sogno un' ombra."

What may be called the official explanation of the origin of the Essays may be found in the address of the author to the reader, published at the beginning of the first edition. "This book," he says, "has a domestic and private object. It is intended for the use of my relations and friends; so that when they have lost me, which they will soon do, they may find in it some features of my condition and humours, and by this means keep up more completely and in a more lively manner the knowledge they have of me." We have here the origin of the famous traditionary preface, according to which all bad books profess to have been originally intended for a few friends; but we shall see from the care which Montaigne took in publication, how much stress we may lay upon this assertion. Elsewhere he better expresses the truth, when he says that he wrote "to be read in the corner of a library to amuse a neighbour, a relative, or a friend."

But this refers to a time when he had clearly a literary object in view. The student would like to be present in spirit, if it were possible, when the seed within him was first quickened. He appears to have been always successful in writing letters; and, indeed, first used his genius, as we have seen, in the service of love. Perhaps his power was originally revealed to

himself by that admirable letter on the death of La Boëtie, which I deliberately compare, on account of its constrained but evident emotion, its philosophical tone, its lofty way of relating the minute incidents of the deathbed of a great and good man, to the "Phædo" of Plato. "If I were a book-maker," he says, thinking of the success of his letter, "I would write a commented register of various deaths." The influence of La Boëtie is as evident in the earlier Essays as the influence of the classics. It is there we find most of those lofty and stoical maxims, those defiances addressed to death, those professions of insensibility, which make Montaigne so much resemble a classical writer of the sonorous and declamatory school. He wears a buskin at first, and treads loftily; but as he goes on forgets that he is playing a part, and soon moves with all the ductility of nature. He imitates Seneca because La Boëtie admired him. It is in the earlier Essays that we find the declaration that popular government seems to him the most natural and equitable; and indeed in them, especially as originally written, we find little that is characteristic of our Conservative moralist, who in some later moods would have had all the world, aye, and nature itself, stand still and be hushed, that he might be able to overthrow his own religious belief, and that of others, in peace.

Some one who had read and admired the letters of Montaigne, both private and published, advised him to adopt the epistolary form, in order to pour out

his thoughts. We have already seen how fashionable letter-writing, for the sake of publishing, had become in that age. But it was the custom to address either imaginary persons, or indifferent persons, or strangers. There was no real necessity or object in writing. This sham displeased Montaigne. If he had still possessed, as he once did—he here again refers to La Boëtie—a friend to sustain and stimulate him, well and good. He would have been more attentive and sure of himself, addressing a single strong and friendly man, than with the diverse countenances of a crowd before him. But he would not create a sham correspondence for the sake of publishing it.

Montaigne was probably diligently engaged in reading and making notes, and may not have definitively adopted the form of Essays, when Amyot published his translation of Plutarch's Moral Works in 1572. "We were lost but for them," said he, and I have no doubt he partly refers to his own case. He determined at once to select a form midway between Seneca and Plutarch, and at once set to work to arrange and co-ordinate his materials. "Fifteen days ago," says he in the nineteenth chapter of the first book, I passed my thirty-ninth year." This must have been in March 1572. It would be impossible, as I have said, with any certainty, to establish what he wrote first; for he always, before publication and after, went on adding here and there. He seems to have intended at the outset to make a sort of gathering of stoical maxims, by the help of which he might struggle against his own too easy

and pliant and feminine nature. But the calm character of his mind is indicated by the very title of the first Essay. "By diverse means we arrive at the same end." And soon the sceptical tone comes on, and then the humane tone. The man who sets out with God-like maxims on contempt of death, ends by recording all the petty experiences of a valetudinarian lover of existence. His factitious fierceness melted by degrees; and only after speculating for twenty years does he seem perfectly to comprehend the nature of unsophisticated man, and see that it is not wise, even if possible, to stilt him on maxims. By recognising this as the development of his mind any one will be able, as far as is necessary, to chronologise his Essays, considered as moral revelations and studies, irrespective of a temporary object.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ESSAYS.

§ 1. *Montaigne's object was to promote Toleration.*

MONTAIGNE had opinions, but no doctrine, properly so called. He did not come forward with any new theory, religious, moral, or political. In physical science—except when, guided by humanity, he saw through such absurdities as sorcery and witchcraft—he was rather behind his age than before; and he scarcely troubled himself about metaphysics. A considerable knowledge of history, especially the anecdotical part of it, but history in its largest sense, including the sequence, ramifications, and influences of laws, manners, opinions, and ideas; a complete and scholar-like acquaintance with ancient, at least Latin, literature; a large experience of society, and the method of transacting its affairs, public and private; fruitful intercourse with all classes of men, learned and unlearned—even the high tone given to his mind by friendship with La Boëtie, formed the qualifications rather of a moralist

of the observing and picturesque class, than of a philosopher destined to influence the creed of his own or future generations.

There have been endless discussions throughout Europe as to the real intentions of Macchiavelli, whether he desired to serve or dis-serve tyranny; there have been discussions as numerous in France as to the intentions of Montaigne, whether he wrote to strengthen or overthrow Catholicism. I have already pointed out some of the obscurities and contradictions which will probably render this debate interminable, and shall have occasion to do so elsewhere. But, if we escape from the influence of particular passages and circumstances, alleged as proofs on one side or the other, and take into consideration the general verdict of Europe, which has never troubled itself about this controversy between the Church and Free-thought in France, we shall come to the conclusion that Montaigne was a Sceptic in the true modern sense. He had not, like Voltaire and his accomplices, a secret, unacknowledged end in view. To have engaged in a conspiracy against Christianity, and committed all the unscrupulous acts which a conspiracy implies, would have seemed shocking to this honest Gascon gentleman —let us venture to say "honest," despite a certain tendency to casuistry, a certain proneness to compromise and concession: a man may be honest in this incomplete world, and not rigid.

But Montaigne was no Believer, in the proper sense of the word, nor inclined to call for help to

his unbelief. In his time, religion had usurped too great a control over humanity—extended its authority too far, and in the wrong direction. He felt inclined to shake it off, in order to be more free in his acts and thoughts. His objection was not so much to Catholicism, with its mysteries and contempt of the human understanding, as to spiritualism in general, with its enthusiasm and contempt of human flesh. Protestantism to him was no promise; it was an additional element of disorder and discomfort. The martyrs who would rather be burned than recant, who set their souls, the existence of which might be made doubtful by a syllogism, above their bodies, (unmistakeable tenements of pain and pleasure)—these men, who went singing to the stake, and fixed sorrowful but forgiving eyes on their persecutors, were almost more detestable to Montaigne than the persecutors themselves. He pitied their sufferings, but was angry with the unreasonable strength of their convictions. Why could they not have quietly doubted the dogmas of the Catholic Church, without making all this fuss about their doubts? After all they might be mistaken —blank nonentity might be behind the door towards which they so resolutely advanced. They were far too earnest in their way of seeking *le grand peutêtre*—as if they had special news from those regions; and were therefore entitled to disturb the peace of the world, and put in peril the lives and fortunes of their fellow-citizens, among others of Michel de Montaigne, who had two thousand écus per annum, a comfortable

château, an agreeable if somewhat shrewish wife, altogether a respectable position, and who wished to spend his days in sunshine and his nights on down. This mode of viewing things might have led Montaigne to join the bigots and the persecutors, but for the tenderness and the humanity which formed so marked an element in his composition. His opinions on men and things were the combined result of the egotism on which so much stress has been laid, and of a sympathy with human kind, which has sometimes been lost sight of. When he published, it was with the definite idea of checking fanaticism and enthusiasm, of leaving man's body to be dealt with only by the civil law, and of confining the Church to the use of spiritual weapons; of enabling, in fact, Catholicism and Protestantism to live side by side together, just as he himself lived with his brother Beauregard.

Naturally, at first, Montaigne had not full consciousness of his mission. Like most persons who have influenced their age, he began his march blindfold and uncertain, amidst clouds and vapour, through unmarked paths; and the air cleared around him, and his step became firmer as he advanced. We may imagine his joy when the sun first struck on the shining goal in the far distance: it was like seeing the sparkle of that white tomb that marked the well in the desert. Whilst seeking merely to put a drag on the rapidity of enthusiasm, to fashion some of his contemporaries to his own indifference of thought and action, the idea of toleration rose in his mind; not

merely religious toleration, but universal tenderness and mansuetude, the necessity of gentleness of man towards man, the greater value of your neighbour's little finger than your own most deep-rooted convictions, which may be absurdities. He was not the first to conceive this idea in the sixteenth century. Rabelais had preached it in his jovial way; but without any other result than admiration; for immediately after his death the rack, the gibbet, and the stake set to work, not to rest for thirty years.

The discovery of the idea of toleration was easier to Montaigne than to any other. He is usually rebuked for his egotism and scepticism; but it was to a certain extent because he was an egotist and a sceptic that the truth became apparent to him. We rightly admire the heroes of self-sacrifice, the servants of faith: they are, perhaps, the highest product of humanity. But we should be very much mistaken if we expected the idea of toleration to come from them. He who sacrifices himself expects others to sacrifice themselves, and is disposed to kill when he cannot convince. When the Revival of Letters and Arts, and the Reformation, came—let us be bold enough to acknowledge so much—our world had been producing saints and martyrs, in crowds, for some fifteen centuries. We need not accept the Romish Calendar, but it does not include all saints. Joan of Arc, the type of self-sacrifice, patriotism, heroism, faith, has never been canonised. But every age, every country, every city, every village, every monastery, in those dark times,

when reason was clouded, produced as a contrast to the general mass of lordly, peasant, and monkish brutality, miracles of constancy and virtue. They enlightened the world by their example, and incited others to follow in the same path. But they, like their admirers — often sottish and stupid — never dreamed that it was not good to force humanity to enter amidst the thorns and rough stones that frightened its unprotected feet. Tread on: why should you be more timid than I? Still less did they conceive the possibility that the emotions which produced in them such ineffable delight, and led to such magnificent actions, were doubtful in their principle, subject to examination, unacceptable by many. Blasphemy was . . . opposition to their ideas — which they identified with God's ideas. How could they think of toleration? Toleration was impiety; and he who suffered impiety here, took the responsibility of it hereafter. It cannot be denied that Faith is dangerous and intolerable when unaccompanied by Charity; and is, in fact, the least divine part of the Christian religion, the one in which it resembles all other religions: whereas Charity, so formally insisted upon by Christ, was rejected with unanimous enthusiasm by the world, as inhuman and supernatural, as soon as He had gone. If the case had been otherwise, we should have never stood in need of the toleration of Montaigne, which is essentially of temporary use, and is based on indifference to high truth, on doubt,

and on contempt of human nature—contempt mitigated by affection of a prudent and decent character.

§ 2. *Immediate Influence of the Essays.*

But it little matters how low Montaigne stooped in order to pick up this pearl of great price, the idea of toleration, which is the capital one of his book, but which he conceals under various forms, and mixes with a thousand different ingredients, in order to make it suit the palate of his times. It would not be important, biographically speaking, to trace its origin, if we did not know its immediate practical influence, and that, though trial drew it bias and thwart, it led within the lifetime of its preacher to a very definite and appreciable historical result.

Montaigne, indeed, much by his writings and something by his personal influence, was one of the chief agents in forming that party of mild and tolerant men, who prepared the advent of Henry the Fourth—that is, the only termination possible, at the time, of civil war and religious discord—the compromise of indifference and bigotry. Every party must have its man of doctrine, as well as its historians, its pamphleteers, its libellers, and its songsters. The moderates, who were allowed to save France because a few remained uncorrupted, had De Thou, Pasquier, D'Aubigné, and the authors of the *Satire Menippée.* Montaigne supplied its philosophy, and accommodated

himself as well to its licentiousness and indifference, as to its humanity and love of peace. France was guided, by him and his friends, from fanaticism, mingled with the most horrible debauchery on one side and repulsive sternness on the other, into a sort of half-way house, where toleration could lead an easy life with Henry the Fourth and the Belle Corisande, and not be too much shocked when the Belle Corisande made way for the Belle Gabrielle. I subscribe to M. Peyrat's admirable criticism of the victim of Ravaillac. Similar reading has led me to a similar result. But he will not deny that the advent of Henry was, under the circumstances, the best thing that could have happened for France; nor that the part played by Montaigne, in preparing public opinion for it, was meritorious. We need not, perhaps, make our Essayist responsible for the exceptionally base act of abjuration, by which, to a certain extent, the labours of the Politic party were nullified. If every man were made responsible for all the consequences contained in his principles, the burden would be too great. Scepticism, of course, prepares for abjuration, when there is a prize in view. Montaigne *might* have been of the party of Sancy, who, though a tolerably worthy man, changed his religion to get a place, and maintained, before Hobbes, under Henry the Fourth, that a good subject was always of the religion of his prince. Not caring for place, the Essayist might have abjured, to set the example of obedience — just for the same reason that, whilst labouring to unsettle the base of Catholicism, he made

profession of its doctrines—with a servility that is almost hypocrisy.

§ 3. *Montaigne's method of arguing from Experience.*

I have thus endeavoured to point out what was the main object of Montaigne; and as it would be out of place here to analyse the Essays, nothing now remains to do but to say something of his way of working, his method of argument, and his individual opinions on certain important topics.

The subject of the Essays is ostensibly Montaigne himself; but this is because the writer regarded each man as an epitome of human nature. As a biographer, I have used the Essays as if they had been Memoirs, almost a journal. But they were not intended as such. They are a series of sketches of the attitudes, physical, moral, and intellectual, of the man with whom Montaigne was always in company. His great difficulty was to find the proper limit for his confessions. He did not at first profess, like Rousseau, to tell all. He only revealed as much as he dared, but the older he grew the bolder he grew. At last, I suspect, he keeps very little in the background. He told things, he says, in print which he would not confess to friends, and sent those who wanted to know his most secret thoughts to a bookseller's shop. It is true that he afterwards pretends, that if any one wanted to learn his inclinations he would most willingly reveal them by word of mouth. "But still,"

he goes on, "in these Memoirs, if you look closely, you will find that I have said all, or indicated all. What I cannot express I point at. I leave nothing to desire or guess. I would willingly come back from the other world to contradict any one who should paint me as other than I am." Elsewhere he says,—"This book is consubstantial with myself." Once or twice he seems troubled by fear of the charge of egotism, and abuses himself for speaking of himself, in order to take the words out of people's mouths. "How often, and, mayhap, how foolishly, have I stretched out this book, by speaking of myself!"

This is the theme that has chiefly been insisted upon by the critics, from Du Puy and Scaliger down to the present day. All accuse him, more or less earnestly, of twaddling; all quote as crimes certain comical instances of communicativeness. But they utterly lose sight of the method of the Essays, of the peculiar dialectical system, as original as the Socratic, invented by Montaigne. This system, of course, is matter of criticism; but it is absurd to squabble about the value of certain isolated observations on white or red wine, on a page, on certain personal defects, and not notice the general reason of their existence. Montaigne determines to set down all his thoughts, in order that for once he and posterity may be able to contemplate the inside of a man's mind, in its most lofty aspirations as in all its meannesses. He does not determine beforehand to give so much space to grand ideas, so much to mean ideas; but lets the

importance assumed in his mind by whatever ideas are there, the stress he lays on them for a time, be the measure of what length they shall occupy. All the rest of literature, moreover, was full enough of grand and pretentious maxims. Men usually showed but one portion of themselves—that which they thought fine; as the courtesans of Rome showed the feature or limb which was most attractive. But Montaigne determined to exhibit himself as a changeful, erring being—never absolutely good or absolutely bad; never entitled to be certain of anything, and, therefore, logically bound to be humble, to spare others, to remain in doubt as to his rights, if not as to his duties.

Montaigne admitted that there was something "supernatural and divine" in man, which was called into play on great occasions, and formed, as it were, his essence and differential character. But these depths of our nature had been too much stirred, too much groped in by inquirers incapable of understanding even the surface. They had brought back nothing but maxims that served as manacles for mankind. We all have souls, and an interest in their fate; but we are not all equally qualified to discuss their qualities and destiny. Yet theologians, and men who borrowed their language, talked then, as now also they do, with flippant familiarity, of the inner mysteries of Being and the ways of God, as if they were dealing with their own especial property, and knew more about them than about their pantry or their till. Mon-

taigne saw the immense and fatal consequences of this arrogance. Its direct product is bigotry, intolerance, and persecution: under its influence, interference with the occupations, pleasures, and general conduct of your neighbour, becomes the first duty of religion. The Essayist — more by instinct at first than deliberation — determined to combat it by an appeal to experience. Having looked around him, and found that the horizon is distant, and every object on it vague — to say nothing of what is beyond — he looks at his feet, and at things within reach of his hand. It is, indeed, in a sort of ironical spirit that he gravely directs attention to the most ludicrously minute particulars. When he tells you that experience teaches him that he likes to scratch his ears, and that the reason thereof is that they itch, he is thinking that profound philosophers can rarely connect cause with effect so certainly; and, yet, what are not their pretensions?

§ 4. *The Essays reflect the Spirit of the Times.*

Montaigne's speculations on man and society were, in a great measure, determined by his moral and material position at the time at which he wrote. He was no mere *littérateur*, imprisoning ideas more or less useful or agreeable in forms of art. His mind was tormented, not only by the common accidents of humanity, but by the peculiar dangers and miseries of that time; and he reveals his torments chiefly in the

hope of finding a remedy. This is the reason that a knowledge of his biography and contemporary history is so essential to comprehension of the Essays. Speaking only of myself, not more than a third appealed merely to my unlearned sympathies; but every new fact I noted down for this work enabled me to open Montaigne with increased pleasure, and find an earnest meaning under what appeared before to be vague phraseology.

The real introduction of the Reformation into France dates from about the time of the birth of Montaigne. As soon as he began to understand anything, he must have heard the conflicting arguments of the rival sects. Soon afterwards, the burning of heretics began in his own neighbourhood. Then he was obliged at least to be present at their condemnation himself, if not to witness their torments. Next he saw the whole of France, with but few intervals of uncertain peace, disturbed by a most ferocious and bloody Civil War for ten years. There is no document to prove an hypothesis which I entertain, and, therefore, I have not alluded to it in the previous narrative. But I believe that Montaigne's intercession between princes and parties, so often alluded to, and referred now to one time, now to another, preceded his retirement to his château, and that this retirement was the result of sudden disgust, produced by the discovery that among the chiefs on both sides ambition was the prime motive, religion a pretext. The friend of La Boëtie may have hoped to play the part of mediator,

which was only suited to that great man. He discovered that all the fine arguments he had prepared to reconcile conflicting beliefs were impotent to reconcile conflicting interests. You will find throughout the Essays the profoundest distrust of all leaders in quest of place and power, and contempt for enthusiastic followers, civil and military, who kill or die, as they imagine, for ideas.

It was, then, as a gentleman and a man of property, somewhat galled by his want of influence, and a little uneasy about his own safety, with very little belief himself, and a conviction, seemingly based on experience, that belief diminished in an equal ratio with the increase of knowledge, that Montaigne began to speculate. However varied may be the topics which he treats, they are all contemporary topics; and though his conclusions sometimes appear contradictory, and he often comes to no conclusion at all, he is always evidently labouring to release man from being governed by combinations of words supposed to represent duties, instead of by his own natural instincts, enlightened by conscience.

§ 5. *Politics.*

In the sixteenth century almost every man was a politician. Scarcely any one ever took up a pen except to discuss some question connected with Church or State. There never was such a swarm of projects and theories. Above them all soared, eagle-like, the ter-

rible manifesto of La Boëtie. But Montaigne was not sufficiently active, or sufficiently interested in mankind, or sufficiently enthusiastic, to engage in such work. His absence from the contest, the death of his friend, the corruption of some intellects, the cowardice of others, may, in part, explain the failure of one of the most active political movements on record—a movement even more active and radical than that which took place in England in the next century. France is subject to these paroxysms, that remind one of the mountain in the fable. All those books, those pamphlets, those satires—to say nothing of those conspiracies and those battles for reform in politics—ended in the substitution of a Bourbon for a Valois, by hereditary succession, on condition of perjury—in the adjournment of Liberalism for exactly two centuries!

The only writer of Montaigne's time who has preserved any reputation as a politician is Jean Bodin, to whom even Bayle accords "a great genius, vast knowledge, and prodigious reading." Bodin was, indeed, an able man, but a pedant and a time-server, who saw that France was settling down into absolute monarchy, and constructed his theories accordingly. He was in favour of religious liberty, and of all sorts of excellent reforms, like L'Hospital: but he could see no means of bringing them about, save "a pure and absolute monarchy." It may be curious, therefore, to study Bodin as the expression of his age; but to bring him forward as a predecessor of Montesquieu. and lavish praises on his penetration and superiority to his con-

temporaries is puerile. In every age and every country we have these official philosophers, who pretend to stand apart and speculate independently; and who construct theories and utter maxims which can be adapted exactly to the government existing, and to no other. Bodin wrote his "Republic" when he was a favourite of Henry the Third; but the praises lavished on his work induced him to believe himself one of the pillars of the State. On one occasion he actually opposed the king's wishes; for which piece of pedantry, into which an absolutist in theory is very liable to fall, he incurred immediate disgrace. He then attached himself to the Duc d'Alençon, who headed a sort of government opposition; he next allied himself with the Ligue; and died in the service of Henry the Fourth.

Montaigne's political career—if such an expression may be used with reference to the sequence of his opinions on State affairs and his connexion with parties—very much resembled that of Jean Bodin, whom he knew and admired. But he did not attempt to form any theory of his own. When young, he probably shared the opinions of La Boëtie, who had evidently the power of communication in a high degree; but as soon as he got beyond that great man's influence, he adopted opinions more in harmony with his court life. He professes in his earlier Essays, at any rate, to admire popular government; says it was "the most natural and equitable;" but when he talks of monarchy, goes no further than a condemnation of evil princes and of those who treat them with the same respect as good

princes. "That rascal Nero," and other such expressions, are mere reminiscences of the "Treatise on Voluntary Servitude." As to the admission that an emperor, if seen behind the curtain, may be viler than the least of his subjects, it is but the unanimous admission of courtiers, the only persons who see kings as they are. "The souls of emperors and cobblers are cast in the same mould," may be of Christian or classical origin, but has nothing to do with anti-monarchical feeling. It is the familiarity of the honest valet with his master, whose vices he ventures to rate and his pride to take down, but whom he cannot conceive otherwise than as his master. He describes "emperors and philosophers, aye, and ladies too," as he wickedly adds, under the most humiliating circumstances, and draws our attention to them, and laughs at them, and covers them with confusion. "The heart of a great and triumphant emperor is but the breakfast of a little worm," says he elsewhere, in the true Hamlet vein.

But the fact is that Montaigne, whatever may have been his secret convictions, makes profession of the most degrading passive obedience, unrelieved even by any theoretical preference. He not only congratulates himself that the laws have chosen a master for him individually, and thus saved him a great deal of trouble, but elsewhere, alluding to the discussions of his time, distinctly says, "To desire to be governed by a few or in a popular manner, or to wish for any change in a monarchy, is vice and folly." He quotes his friend

Pibrac, who, in a *quatrain*, maintains the same thing; adding the reason, very proper in the mouth of a sincere Catholic, ludicrous in that of Montaigne: "For God has caused us to be born in that condition." Elsewhere our indolent philosopher, exalting the happiness of passive obedience, is absolutely enthusiastic: "Happy the people which does what it is commanded to do better than they who command, without tormenting itself about causes, which allows itself quietly to roll on like stars in their celestial order! Obedience is never pure and tranquil in him who reasons and pleads." All these fine phrases, we must remember, were written at a time when France was deluged with blood, in consequence of the refusal of its best citizens, who would "reason and plead," to square the pattern of their religion to the orders of Francis the First and his insane and sanguinary brood; and are intended, we must regretfully admit, as a justification of the monarchy, which was struggling to oppress the consciences of men until it chose, from caprice or judgment, to lay down other rules. Elsewhere, it is true, Montaigne pleads for mercy; but in doing so, according to his own theory, he departs from pure and tranquil obedience. What he would have liked would have been a sort of Paraguay immobility, the people brigaded and kept in respectable ease, whilst he had full liberty to play with his own hopes and shake the hopes of others.

A considerable portion of the Essays deals, however, with the practical part of politics, on which Mon-

taigne expresses his opinions very freely. Here and there we may find very good Whig wisdom. He discusses the conduct of princes and of parties with the idea of compromise ever in his mind; but this part of his writings, together with his strictures on military and diplomatic matters, is comparatively unimportant.

§ 6. *News from America.*

We have already seen that La Boëtie's imagination was struck by the news that daily arrived of the wonders of America, and that he conceived a project of colonisation. When Montaigne came to write on the same subject, he recovered all his natural sagacity. "Our world," he says, "has just discovered another; and who knows whether this will be the last of its brothers, since its existence was concealed until now from the Dæmons, from the Sybils, and from us? .... If we argue well, that other world will enter the light just as we are about to leave it." He exaggerates the simplicity of the Americans, and exalts their good faith and virtues above those of their conquerors. If the Greeks or Romans had discovered those vast regions, how differently would they have dealt with them! The cruelty of the Spaniards excites his wrath. "Whoever set at so high a price the service of trade and traffic? So many cities razed to the ground, so many nations exterminated, so many millions of people put to the sword, and the richest and most beautiful part

of the world desolated, to favour dealings in pearls and pepper! Mechanical victories! Never did ambition, never did public enmity, urge men to inflict on each other such horrible hostilities, calamities so wretched."

The fortunes of America interested Montaigne so much, that he took into his service a man who had travelled there, and who constantly supplied him with information. He had lived ten or twelve years in the country where Villegaignon landed in 1557,—at that time called Antarctic France, now the Brazils. He resided long at the château, whither he brought from time to time sailors and traders whom he had known during his voyage. Montaigne resolved to be satisfied with his information, without inquiring what the Cosmographers said.

The Essay "On Cannibals," in which Montaigne relates all this, may be said to contain his Utopia. Here we find the hint of Rousseau's paradox against civilisation; as well as the first sketch of Gonzalo's Commonwealth in the "Tempest."—"It is a nation," to use the words of Florio's translation, from which Shakspeare copied many whole phrases, "that hath no kind of trafficke, no knowledge of letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politic superioritie; no use of service, of riches, or of povertie; no contracts, no successions, no partitions, no occupation, but idle; no respect of kindred, but common; no apparel, but natural; no use of wine, corne, or metal. The very words that import lying, falsehood, treason, dissimulations, covetousness, envie, detraction and par-

don, were never heard amongst them." This passage had long ago been used by Commentators on Shakspeare; but recently, with one or two other less direct examples, has been made the foundation of an elaborate theory on the influence of Montaigne on our dramatist. It is needless to point out how exaggerated this theory is. Many other writers were used more copiously by Shakspeare than was Montaigne. On the other hand, it would be interesting to trace in a moderate spirit the influence of the Essayist on the writers, not only of the age of Queen Elizabeth in England, but up to the reign of Queen Anne, when more modern French literature began to have its day. "Epitomes," says Bacon, "are the moths and corruptions of learning." . . . "Every abridgment of a good book," says Montaigne, "is a stupid abridgment." Examples of this kind might be collected to make a volume.

§ 7. *Religion.*

When Protestantism was first introduced into France, the nobility, little serious in anything, adopted the new doctrines as they might have adopted a new fashion. At the court of Francis the First, despite that monarch's unenlightened bigotry, it was a mark of good taste and cultivation to be Protestant. The Reform appeared only as a kind of witty and moral protest against the absurdities of the Church and the vices of the clergy. No one suspected the terrible earnestness, so opposed to the ordinary French character, that there

was at the bottom of it. Even the court ladies piqued themselves on being Calvinistic, until it was found that in the new religion adultery was not only blamed, but punished.

But by degrees all this changed. The Church, taken by surprise at first—a fact well expressed in Bandello's story of the praises lavished on Luther by Leo the Tenth—and then, for a time, puzzled how to regain lost ground, soon collected its forces and came back furious to the charge. If we look towards the beginning of the sixteenth century, we shall see a bright ray of sunshine resting on the earth; but presently a heavy black cloud comes and overshadows it. A long and sanguinary reaction, with many pauses, during which new strength was gathered, began. Never was the violent and Macchiavellian character of the Catholic Church more completely exhibited than in France during the sixteenth century. The Albigeois were killed by men who, to a certain extent, believed. The Catholic Church in the sixteenth century believed in little save its temporal goods. To defend these, it lashed up itself and its ignorant adherents to fury. The Historian of the Jesuits calls Luther "The Hog of Epicurus!" Let us note that the Noyades were introduced into France by the Catholics, as punishments of a defeated party. They were first used, singularly enough, in the Loire, after the conspiracy of Amboise; but the Protestants did not find the secret, as did later the Royalists of France, of iterating their maledictions until their enemies were overwhelmed by public hatred.

It is true, this mode of proceeding was in harmony with that age. One of the Strozzis, happening to observe that a number of loose women followed his army despite his repeated orders, adopted the Turkish method, and ordered eight hundred of them to be drowned. We must remember such examples when we estimate the cruelty of the Church, lest we be carried too far. Its crime was that it used force at all, without the stimulus of profound belief: the extent to which it used it was, of course, determined by the character of the age.

It was about 1552 that all attempts at reconciliation between the Protestants and Catholics seem to have failed: none repeated them afterwards, save dupes or hypocrites. Montaigne was then a youth, and made his choice between the two doctrines; deciding in favour of the established religion with his friend La Boëtie. A younger brother became a Protestant; and, as we have seen, maintained his new opinions with much zeal and heat. Pierre Eyquem remained a Catholic, and rather superstitious; but, even in 1563, does not seem to have been very much hurt at the conversion of Beauregard. No doubt the latter had warm discussions with Montaigne on religion. Perhaps it was he who used to hold that "fantastical opinion," according to which, all who showed much intelligence and professed Catholicism were hypocrites. At any rate, the Essayist had evidently been suspected of dishonesty in this respect. He, therefore, tells the story of a man who confessed to him that all his life long he had pro-

fessed a religion which he thought damnable, in order not to lose his credit and position; and severely blames such conduct.

Montaigne takes up the extremest views of the Catholic Church, and laughs at the people who thought to render the Bible more accessible by having it translated into the vernacular. He will not even allow the words of Scripture to be quoted to appease debate, depending entirely on the interpretations of authority. This is so like the language of a staunch Catholic that I am not surprised simple men have been led astray; have not perceived the sly innuendo of the Essayist; and have written whole books to claim him as a faithful servant of Mother Church. Montaigne, by inclination, by prudence, by indifference to religion generally, was averse to Protestantism, which he calls a "contemplative and immaterial religion;" and this aversion alone made him two-thirds a Catholic. But he was not incapable of seeing the advantage which the competition of the new sect had proved of to the Church. From this point of view, he says, "I know not if the utility does not surpass the damage;"—a hint on which no true believer in that age would have ventured.

But Montaigne in reality disliked Protestantism because it was new, and not victorious; because it bored and frightened him. He never knew how much of his own speculations was derived from that source. All his life he professed dutiful submission to the Catholic

Church. He went to chapel in his own house; and when he travelled, took every occasion to attend mass. We shall presently see him on the road to Loretto, and kissing the Pope's toe. He prayed and used the Lord's prayer, the more frequent repetition of which he recommended. He would have had it repeated at sitting down to table and at rising, on getting up in the morning and on going to bed. I suspect he took this hint, without acknowledgment, from the Protestants. But, at any rate, the whole "Essay on Prayer" breathes a true spirit of devotion, though rather such as might actuate a philosophical Christian or mere Deist, than a good Catholic. However, he had the habit of crossing himself on all occasions of peril, even when he yawned; though he thought it wrong to use so sacred a sign so lightly. Elsewhere, defending the pomps and ceremonies of the Church against the Protestants, he says: "It will be hard to make me believe that the sight of our crucifixes and the painting of that pitiable death, that the ornaments and ceremonious movements of our churches, that the voices adapted to the devotion of our thoughts, and that emotion of our senses, do not warm the soul of the people with a religious passion of very useful effect." Again: "There is no mind," he says, "so obstinate that it is not touched with some reverence at beholding the sombre vastness of our churches, the diversity of the ornaments, the order of our ceremonies; at hearing the devout sound of our organs, the harmony, so measured and religious, of our voices.

Even they who enter with contempt feel a certain thrill in the heart, and a certain terror which makes them suspect their own opinion."

("And those who came to scoff remained to pray.")

In fact, all through Montaigne's writings we see traces that he was a professing Catholic—and the professor comes often to believe from habit—who, for good reasons of his own, wished equally to disculpate himself from the charge of being a Leaguer or a heretic, which had been brought against him: "I much dislike that vicious form of expressing one's self, 'he belongs to the Ligue, for he admires the grace of M. de Guise;—the activity of the King of Navarre astonishes him: therefore he is a Huguenot.'"

Some one had condemned him for putting a heretic among the best poets of the age: "May I not say of a thief," he asks, rather unpolitely for Théodore de Bèze, "that he has a well-made leg?"

It is not, however, so important for the estimation of Montaigne's character and doctrine as may at first sight appear, to decide what were the dogmas he held in his ordinary life and moods. His distinctive characteristic is the internal boldness, encouraged by indifference, with which he grapples with his own opinions, as well as those of others, and shakes them, as if to see that they are solid, but without much care whether he does not leave them ever after unsteady and tottering.

Though Reimmann classes Montaigne, with the

suitors of Penelope and every one whom he dislikes, in his catalogue of Atheists, it is certain that he believed in God, of whom he speaks with devout enthusiasm. He adopts the declamatory Ciceronian proofs of the existence of a Divine Being; and, against his usual custom, suggests no doubts.

Montaigne attacks idolatry, and, perhaps covertly, the Catholic worship of images, which he openly approved: "We cheat ourselves with our inventions, as children are frightened by their companion's face which they have blackened. We are very far from honouring Him who made us when we honour what we have made. Man is mad: he can't make a monkey; he makes gods by dozens;" and so forth.

§ 8. *Morals.*

The most considerable part of Montaigne's Essays is that which treats of Morals; but of this I shall say the least. It is by his maxims and developments of the duties of man that he has gained his world-wide reputation; and nothing can be more beautiful than his method of saying the best-known truths over and over again, striking his reader each time with some new turn, some new figure, some new application. He admired and imitated the Stoics and Epicureans in their loftiest demands on human nature; but it is impossible to disguise that he was himself, to a certain extent, an Epicurean in the modern and now proper sense of the word. Thus there is a constant war between the

sentences which so thickly stud the Essays, especially towards the outset, and the confessions that accompany and drolly nullify them, chiefly towards the end. In a word, Montaigne, though a good, and by no means licentious man, if compared with his age, made larger concessions, in theory and practice, to appetite, than any ethical writer would now venture to approve of. This was partly matter of temperament, but in part flowed from his system. Like Rabelais, he was disgusted with the enormous contrast between the divine maxims of the "Imitation," and the practice of those who read and professed to admire them. "Let us aim at less and pretend less," he cried; "and perhaps our professions and our actions may be less far apart." Many men, of very pure manners, have sometimes felt a wicked delight in calling things by their right names in the presence of piety that suggests the idea of hypocrisy. A great deal of Montaigne's obscenity is of this kind. But some is evidently introduced to make the Essays "a book for a parlour window"—even to bring them within that class the difficulty of reading which, in quarto days, a lady of the eighteenth century once deplored. Perhaps every heroic saying is counterbalanced by a little filth.

A wonderful book of maxims and moral thoughts might be made out of the Essays—at the risk, sometimes, of ascribing to Montaigne what had been said three thousand years before him—sometimes of appearing to borrow from the world's general stock of proverbial wisdom:—"Our minds are never at home,

but ever beyond home."—"I will take care, if possible, that my death shall say nothing that my life has not said."—"Life in itself is neither good nor bad: it is the place of what is good or bad."—"Knowledge should not be stuck on to the mind, but incorporated in it."—"Irresolution seems to me the most common and apparent vice of our nature."—"Age wrinkles the mind more than the face."—"Habit is a second nature," said Montaigne for the first time, we are told.—"Hunger cures love."—"It is easier to get money than to keep it."—"Anger has often been the vehicle of courage."—"It is more difficult to command than to obey."—"A liar should have a good memory."—"The world seems made only for brutal or divine minds."—"Ambition is the daughter of presumption."—"Reason is a pot with two handles, that you may take hold of right or left."—"To serve a prince you must be discreet and a liar."—"We learn to live when life has passed."—"The mind is ill at ease when its companion has the colic."—"We are all richer than we think; but we are brought up to go a-begging."—"The greatest masterpiece of man is . . . to be born at the right time!"

§ 9. *Scepticism.*

Montaigne once says: "We are, I know not how, of a double nature, so that what we believe we do not believe."

This sentence well expresses the state of uncertainty in which he himself seems to have remained on the

most important subjects that occupy human speculation. In most men, perhaps, there is something of the sceptic and of the believer at the same time; and the opposition of these two characters may be the struggle of our animal and spiritual natures; but in Montaigne the co-existence of two apparently inter-destructive principles was, in general, most remarkably evident. This appears to me, at any rate, a sounder, at least a more humane view, than that which makes him to have been a mere hypocrite when he went to mass or uttered devout sentiments, and more sensible than that which represents him as a good Catholic, anxious to fortify the Church by confounding and humiliating the reason of man.

Montaigne's earnest desire to submit to the Church was nullified by his irresistible tendency to free examination. Naturally of an inquiring, doubting, balancing mind, he was forced to think, by the very Protestantism which he feared. When his father entrusted to him the task of translating and improving the arguments of Raymond de Sebonde, it is probable that some slight and fleeting hesitations on the great metaphysical facts which form the basis of religion —as the existence of an overruling Providence, and the immortality of the soul—had already disturbed him. These hesitations must have returned whilst the work was progressing; and we may be quite sure, that whilst the study of the "Natural Theology" gave to his mind and language a pietist hue which they

never afterwards quite lost, it left him in a state of uncertainty from which he never recovered.

If we could believe that Montaigne was capable of absolute hypocrisy, it would be after reading the famous "Apologie" from beginning to end. He sets out with the profession that he intends to take down the pride of human reason, in order to leave no rival to faith; and yet, throughout that Essay, he employs now the most subtle argument, now the most audacious sophistry, in order to disturb the basis of faith. I shall not here attempt to analyse his sceptical reasonings, my object being to describe the nature of the Essays, not to criticise them philosophically. These reasonings are not to be found only in the "Apologie," but are artfully scattered here and there, especially where you would not expect to find them; for the attack on miracles is introduced in an "Essay on Lame People." Now-a-days they are no longer new and surprising to the popular, as they were neither new nor surprising to the learned in the sixteenth century. Sextus Empiricus had embodied them long before, and the ancient schools were familiar with them. But they had not been circulated among the general public. For the last three hundred years, however, a class of literary men, chiefly in France, have become the pedlars of these old-fashioned wares, amidst which from time to time, at long intervals, a new article, or a newly-adorned one, takes its place. Every one is more or less prepared to be a customer. The faith which can

move mountains is as absent now as of yore from the world. But Montaigne did not expect, as some of his less sagacious followers seem to have expected, to overthrow doctrines which are coeval with humanity, or even the creed against which he more particularly directed his attacks. Taking, as usual, his image of human nature from himself, and assuming a duality, according to which belief and disbelief necessarily exist side by side, he endeavoured to extend the dominions of the latter—partly because the former had too long reigned nominally supreme, and was tormenting the world; partly from mere love of intellectual mischief. I have endeavoured already to show how Montaigne's scepticism was enlisted in the service of toleration, and that what he chiefly objected to was the ferocious earnestness of people who "set their opinions at so high a rate that they were ready to burn those who differed from them." Most of his anti-Christian arguments, therefore, were used for the Christian purpose of appeasing the rage of man against man. I suspect he has never made a single unbeliever, and cannot imagine any one but a very serious bigot indeed being offended by his speculations. They come in, as it were, as part of the picture of man, always so liable to doubt and uncertainty.

§ 10. *Attack on Spiritualism.*

Whilst attacking dogmatism of all kinds, Montaigne was helping to carry out the great work of the

sixteenth century, which I shall call the Naturalisation of Man; in other words, a return towards the avowed dominion of the natural instincts, which had been theoretically too much suppressed and despised by the scholastic philosophy. This also was apparently an attack on Christianity; but in reality only a pedantic and sham Christianity was concerned. There are far more concessions to the body in Scripture than theologians will allow; and exaggerated interpretation in this sense, but not mere delusion, was the origin of some of the extraordinary sects which sprung up as soon as the Scriptures were placed in the hands of the people.

But Montaigne was not only an adversary of the theologians and metaphysicians of the middle ages; he laboured also—sometimes using popular prejudices and the most absurd fables as weapons—to deliver man from the horrible positiveness of science—science based chiefly on *à priori* reasoning, or on tradition. His now humorous, now fervid, attack on the doctors, was part of this work. Like Rabelais, he had dwelt so much on the arrogance of the men who professed to have a special call to take care of our bodies and our souls, that he almost hated them. At any rate, he was in perpetual insurrection against them, as he was against legislators and judges. There were more laws, he said, in France than would have sufficed to govern all the worlds of Epicurus. He dared to disbelieve in sorcery, and wrote with rare indignation against torture. Everywhere we find

Montaigne meeting the solemn affirmative with an almost ironical negative. He wished to bring us down into the middle region; but, had not his influence been counteracted, would have weighed us considerably below it. His pleadings for the body sometimes forget what is "supernatural and divine" in us.

§ 11. *Ideas on Education.*

To Montaigne we owe the first rational system of education propounded in modern times. It is needless to insist on the beauty and simplicity of his theory, or on the exquisite language in which it is conveyed. There is, probably, no Essay better known than that addressed to Madame Diane de Foix, on the "Institution" of the little Count who was soon to be in her arms. Every sentence almost is pregnant with wisdom; and if we take into consideration the difference between these times and those, and are confined in our object to the education of a young gentleman of property, there really is nothing to add or to subtract. The rash and indolent students, who will not study for fear of stifling their originality, may learn the whole theory of reading by reflecting on the following figure: "The bees fly here and there rifling the flowers, but of them they make honey which is all their own; it is no longer thyme nor marjoram."

Montaigne reminds the teacher of his duty. "It is not a soul, nor is it a body, you have to train, but a Man." He is indignant against corporal punishment

inflicted on children, and, indeed, forestalls most of the reasonable ideas of Rousseau. Locke, too, was indebted to him for many hints. Indeed, not only on this topic, but on most others, Montaigne's Essays, being, from their form and substance, peculiarly susceptible of such treatment, have been used as a storehouse both of expressions and ideas—as often without as with acknowledgment. Thus he fell under the law of retaliation, but I am sure it is a libel to represent him as indignant thereat.

§ 12. *Concluding Observation.*

An endeavour to sketch some of the chief features of the Essays in a way suited to the undidactic character of this work has led me into a desultory chapter. It would, however, be difficult to describe so varied and complicated a work in a manner more connected. If my account be incomplete, it suggests at any rate the idea of incompleteness; and if an apparent contradiction sometimes occurs, it is because Montaigne is full of contradictions, which can be explained in only one way. "If I paint myself diversely," he says, "it is because I see myself diversely." How imprison a judgment of such a man's productions in a few even and consistent sentences? Those who have endeavoured to do so, have generally been content to take a portion of Montaigne for Montaigne himself. For my part, I feel an uncertainty about some of his doctrines, which I should with regret see displaced by absolute con-

viction. When a definite critical conviction is formed, it is often put aside and allowed to grow rusty. Doubt keeps the mind active.—Was, then, the Essayist an absolute unbeliever, hiding behind the mask of false piety; or was he half a Christian, half a Pagan—an admirer sometimes of the Apostate Julian, sometimes a worshipper of "Truth itself?" Both opinions, as the Jesuits say, are probable; and I often feel inclined to lean towards the one, often towards the other. Morally and philosophically, however, it is a venturesome task to judge any man in the last resort; and, after some years' communion with a professed doubter, I have learned to doubt my infallibility as a critic.

We must remember, finally, that Montaigne would not say "I am ignorant," or "I doubt;" for this was affirmation; but adopted as his device the interrogation, QUE SÇAY-JE?

And with this perpetual question on his lips he passed through life.

CHAPTER IX.

EVENTS OF MONTAIGNE'S LIFE DURING THE WRITING OF THE ESSAYS.

I BELIEVE the ordinary account, which makes Montaigne spend about eight years, chiefly in Perigord, after his retirement in 1571, to be the correct one. We cannot otherwise understand the production of the Essays. The attempt to diminish the length and the intensity of Montaigne's seclusion, and to transmute him into a sort of small diplomatist and second-rate politician, who jotted down his thoughts on such trifles as morality and religion in odd moments, has not been successful. Luckily so. Posterity, indeed, cannot do otherwise than regret that, after his twenty years of experience of the court and public life in a small way, Montaigne was not able to spend the *whole* remainder of his time in recording the results of that experience, and comparing outward facts with revelations of his inner life. "Every man is a fool or a physician at forty." What more has Montaigne to learn from contact with men? Too long experience of active life

deadens the moral sense, and makes us love the world and it alone. There are millions of "observers" who have nothing to tell us. If we were to find out that Montaigne, as soon as he had set up his inscription, did really flinch and go perpetually hankering back for office and employment, or even the society of great people, we should be disposed to suspect his value. He had no call to meddle in politics. He did not understand them. There were advocates enough of passive obedience; and it is already sufficiently disagreeable to find the friend of Estienne de la Boëtie appearing, even at wide intervals, as a valet and a courtier.

But although we may be quite sure that the two books of Essays first published—I mean the preparatory reading for them as well as the execution—were sufficient to occupy Montaigne the chief part of the eight years which Dom de Vienne says he spent in his château, it is not necessary to suppose that he absolutely shut himself up there and never on any occasion went forth. This would be too romantic a fact to be accepted, even if there were no positive proofs to the contrary; as, for example, where he says that he wrote bit by bit, and was sometimes interrupted by absences of several months. He accounts in this way for the disconnexion of the Essays, their jerks and transitions. "I am no artist," he says, "but write as I feel the impulse." In one place he attributes the origin of the Essays to a melancholy humour, produced by the chagrin of the solitude into which he had cast himself

for some years; but we know that he began to write at once in 1571, and dashed down the sketches of nineteen Essays in the first year. There is every appearance that he made arrangements for his retirement with the deliberate intention of writing. But, as I have said, he never meant to imitate his friend the Dean of St. Hilary, and put himself in perpetual quarantine.

In order to prove Montaigne's presence in Paris in 1572, we are told that Charles the Ninth held then a chapter of the Order of St. Michel, in order to give a sort of sanction to the St. Bartholomew; and as all the members were invited, it is supposed that our Essayist could not have failed to come. But we like to believe that Montaigne was not in Paris during that horrible year. At any rate, better proofs are required. Until they appear, let us imagine him studying quietly in his château, and receiving from some chance passenger the news of the massacre.

Until the Paris Matins, an unusual quiet had brooded over France, resembling the silence of nature about to give birth to an earthquake. When the shock took place, its vibrations were rapidly felt all through France. Petty massacres took place here, fierce resistance rose there. In Guienne, the chief Protestants seized as many fortified towns as they could by surprise and escalade, and prepared to sell their lives dearly. Many little posts in the neighbourhood of Montaigne's château were occupied by rival parties, but there was little fighting. The Catholics were al-

most ashamed of their victory. The Protestants were stunned; and many, indeed, began to doubt whether those doctrines could be true which brought upon the country such terrible disasters. We need not be surprised, therefore, if Montaigne complained of them as introducers of novelties.

In 1573, the passage of the Dordogne was once vigorously disputed, and the whole country on its banks was overrun by small armed parties. But the great struggle was elsewhere, at La Rochelle—heroine among cities. But another lull was preparing. Despite the Republican pamphlets that were in circulation, there was no chance left of a modification in the form of government. The wretched Charles the Ninth died, and was succeeded by the equally wretched Henry the Third. The only palliation that took place was the formation of the party of Politicals, the basis of which had been laid before his death by L'Hospital. The chiefs of this party were Guillaume de Montmorency and Henri de la Tour, Vicomte de Turennes.

Our Essayist was too cautious to join it at first. Indeed he seems to have been a member of the Ligue until that association openly broke with Henry the Third: afterwards he gradually veered toward the party of Henry of Navarre, without going further than loyalty allowed until the throne became vacant.

We know that, in 1574, Montaigne was employed by the Duke of Montpensier, commanding one of the king's armies in Poitou about the time of Charles the Ninth's death, on a mission to the Parliament of

Bordeaux. The secret registers of the Parliament contain, indeed, a statement to the effect that in May, 1574, it was announced that "the Sieur de Montaigne, a chevalier of the Order of the King, and formerly conseiller in the court, was in the hall of audience asking to speak to the said court, and that it was resolved that he should be admitted and allowed to take his place in the middle of the bureau of the Grand Chambre. When the said Montaigne entered, he presented the letters of the Sieur de Montpensier addressed to the court. After they had been read, the said Montaigne made a long speech."

The "long speech" has not been preserved, and we do not know on what business Montaigne was engaged. It is pretty evident, however, that being a distinguished member of the Royalist and Catholic party, on whom distinctions had recently been bestowed, he was employed to carry a message of some importance to a Parliament in which he had many friends. That his mission, however, had little influence on the course of public affairs, we may infer from the fact that De Thou, who got all his information on the history of Guienne from Montaigne, never alludes to it. It is not necessary to suppose that this episode was of long duration, or distracted him very much from his studies. Whenever he sallied forth from his château, he must have seen new reasons, in the deplorable state of the country, to regret the absence from the world of the simple principle, "live and let live," which he was employing himself in illustrating and enforcing.

M. Grün has some very ingenious and almost conclusive reasonings to prove that Montaigne was at court about this time, employed in his famous negociation between the Guises and Henry of Navarre. He cleverly argues, also, that Montaigne was at court during the early part of the reign of Henry the Third, from an observation of his to the effect that formerly gentlemen remained covered in presence of the king, but that when he wrote the forty-third chapter of the First Book he said: "we are now compelled to remain uncovered." This innovation was introduced by Henry the Third, it is true, but it is not proved that the practice was discontinued during his reign. The old custom was, however, revived afterwards, and is alluded to by Webster in "The Duchess of Malfi:"—

> "I've heard you say that the French courtiers
> Wear their hats on 'fore the king."

At any rate we must necessarily suppose a journey to court to account for the title of *Gentilhomme ordinaire de la Chambre du Roi*, which we find Montaigne bearing in 1580. But this journey took place probably just before the publication of the Essays. The Gentlemen of the Bedchamber were then no longer called valets, and wore a gold key attached to their girdles. They were in every respect servants of the king. They became so numerous under Henry the Third, that, like the members of the Order of St. Michel, they ceased to be respected; and we can only regret that Montaigne who, by the by, never received a title while it was worth

having, consented, or was compelled, to take such an office. A debate has been opened as to whether he received any emoluments, but he himself boasts that he never got anything from a king; and as officers nominally entitled to a salary, unless Mignons, were scarcely ever paid by Henry the Third, it is possible that Montaigne gained nothing but a very equivocal honour.

It seems, at any rate, certain, that Montaigne's estate and château, being situated somewhat out of the way, suffered little or nothing during the various wars that took place between the Saint Bartholomew and the publication of the Essays. This may partly have arisen from his not coming forward in an obnoxious manner, although he was universally known to belong decidedly to the Catholic interest. The identification of Montaigne with a party has not been sufficiently noticed. He always most clearly ranges himself under a particular banner. His "Essay on Conscience" begins as follows: "As my brother, the Sieur de la Brousse, and I, were travelling one day during our civil wars, it fell out that we met a gentleman of good appearance. He was of a contrary party to ours; but I knew nothing of it; for he pretended to be what he was not. The worst of these wars is, that the pack is so beaten, your enemy is distinguished from you by no apparent mark, neither of language nor carriage. He has been brought up under the same laws, with the same manners, and in the same air, so that it is difficult to avoid confusion and disorder. This made me, myself,

fear to meet our troops in a place where I was unknown, lest I should be obliged to tell my name, or meet with worse annoyance. The poor gentleman whom we met was in such a dreadful fright, that he seemed ready to die every time we crossed a horseman, or passed through a town which held for the king. In this way I divined that his conscience was troubled. It seemed to him, that through his mask and the crosses on his cassock I could read in his heart his secret intentions."

We have curious details on the state of Montaigne's house, and his way of life during this eventful period. He says, that in order to avoid attacks, he made a great show of not defending himself. He opened his doors, so that no one could have the excuse of being incited by the love of glory to attack him. Whoever knocked was admitted. The only defence was a porter, according to ancient use and ceremony, who served not to forbid his door but to offer admission more decently and graciously. No one mounted guard or was sentinel for him, save the stars over his head. He objected to the system of semi-fortification adopted by his neighbours. "Unless you are well fortified, it is best not to be fortified at all." He notices the increase of facilities for attack, and says that his house was considered strong in old times, but that he had not gone on fortifying it. He knew that when peace came he should be obliged to destroy his works. Besides, in civil wars, your valet may be of the opposite party, and even your relations. To be always ready for defence

would ruin any private finances, and the only way would be to do as so many others did—to live on unprotected neighbours. Montaigne had seen many well-guarded houses provoke assault and be taken. "As for me," he says, "let danger come, I will not call it. This is the retreat in which I rest from the wars. I try to relieve this corner from the public tempest as I do another corner in my soul. Our war may change its forms and multiply our parties if it pleases. I will not budge. Among so many armed houses I am the only man that I know in France, of my condition, who has confided purely to Heaven the protection of mine. I have never sent to a place of safety neither vessel of silver, nor title-deed, nor tapestry."

We shall see, however, further on, what happened as times became worse and the country more demoralised. During the whole of his first retirement Montaigne was almost unmolested. Several important events occurred in the neighbourhood. At the Paix de Monsieur, in 1576, so favourably to the Protestants, Perigueux was given to them, as one of their places of surety. In 1577 conferences took place between the representatives of Henry the Third and the King of Navarre, at Bergerac, and a treaty was signed. These treaties, however, were rarely adhered to by chiefs or partizans. In 1579 another conference was thought necessary at Nerac, and a new confirmatory edict. It was in 1579 that the Lovers' War broke out. Then Catherine was at Agen with Marguerite. In 1580 a conference was held at Fleix, between the Duke of

Anjou and the Protestant delegates. Fleix belonged to the Marquis de Trans. The terms of the article of Nerac were reverted to.

But, unless some new documents are produced —and this is not likely—we may safely consider Montaigne to have been almost exclusively occupied from 1571 to 1580 with his Essays.

CHAPTER X.

PUBLICATION OF THE ESSAYS.

At length the reward of Montaigne's exertions came. His manuscript was in a fit state to be delivered to the printer. It must have been curious to look at. Montaigne dictated a part of the Essays; and probably had all copied. This is why he says, with gentlemanly ease: "My secretaries must answer for orthography and punctuation." He very probably, indeed, at first, did leave this care entirely to others. With good reason; for, in spite of his elaborate education, the specimens we have of his own writing show that he generally spelt like an ignorant soldier. Afterwards, finding himself forced to attend to these things, he drew up a list of directions for the printer, which shows that he had good common-sense notions about orthography, mingled with some crotchets.

We have very few facts to record with reference to the preparations made for publication. Sterne has said, that Montaigne feared his Essays would become "a book for a parlour-window." Montaigne had,

certainly, the ladies much more in view when he wrote than any other author of the day, except the poets and romancers. And this although he pretends, with Molière, that he would confine women to the wardrobe and the kitchen! The influence of the sex on style in France began in the sixteenth century. Montaigne felt it, tried to resist it, said coarse things in order to show his independence, but yielded, nevertheless, in a great measure. Mr. Emerson, in his "Representative Men," curiously enough remarks, that the coarseness of Montaigne is explained by the fact that such writings were never intended to be read by ladies. This was so little the case, that not one of the Essays is dedicated to a man. Montaigne seems to have forgotten the cluster of noble friends to whom he inscribed the works of La Boëtie. This is an observation that has not been made, and yet is particularly illustrative of his character. He tells us himself that the translation of Raymond de Sebonde had been much read by ladies, who had been puzzled by the meaning, and had come to him for enlightenment. He therefore wrote the "Apology," addressing it to Marguerite of Navarre. The "Essay on the love of Fathers to their Children" is addressed to Madame d'Estissac; the collection of La Boëtie's "Sonnets" to Madame de Grammont; the "Essay on Education" to the Comtesse de Gurson; and now, in the midst of the last Essay of the Second Book—that is, of the last Essay published in the first edition—we find intercalated a dedication to Madame de Duras, another lady belonging to the Grammont family. That lady

had recently paid him a visit, and had spent some time at his house. Her husband, Jean de Durfort, seigneur de Duras, had just fought a duel, supported by Rosans, a relative, against the Vicomtes de Turennes and Salignac. They fought on the banks of the Garonne, and the Duras obtained the victory. But they were accused of foul play, and were compelled to hide at the house of some friend. As the residence of Madame de Duras at Montaigne coincides in date with this incident, it was probably to Montaigne that they retired. I may as well add that this Madame de Duras was the confidante, the female minister, of Marguerite of Navarre. When the latter left Paris, in 1583, to return to the court of Nérac, whither news had been sent of her disorders, Henry the Third, her brother, caused her to be searched; and arrested Mesdames de Duras and Bethune. M. de Duras was afterwards her representative at Agen, whilst she was carrying on the war against her husband and her brother in the name of the Ligue; and so tyrannous over the inhabitants was he as nearly to drive them to insurrection.

All the external incidents of this part of the life of Montaigne are but very obscurely known. The first edition of the Essays was printed and published at Bordeaux; but we have no statement as to the kind of success it met with. Philarète Chasles observes that the works of Tabourot, "who never wrote six pages exempt from madness and bad taste," had a greater vogue in that day than the Essays. This is possible.

Montaigne himself has said that his book was not fitted for the loftiest or the humblest minds, being too learned for the one and not enough for the other; but was made to live in a humble way in the middle region. I believe his popularity among the best intellects was immediate, although we have no trace of criticism at first. The people of Gascony, who knew him personally, thought it droll, he says, to see him in print. But as his book went further off it was better appreciated: he had to pay printers and publishers in Guienne; elsewhere they were eager to buy him. However, it is evident the book sold and was read. The favourable reception of the first edition it was that encouraged him to go on, though he feared to tire the public, as a learned man of his age had done. He set to work at once to improve and polish what he had already published.

As to the opinions of his personal friends, he seems to have cared little about them; for in his case, as in most others, personal friends were the last to perceive his value. "Really very clever for an illiterate country gentleman," was at first the judgment of Pasquier and his learned colleagues. This was partly because of the absence of quotations from the classical authors. In subsequent editions Montaigne determined to repair this defect, and sometimes inconveniently crowded his margin, whence the notes ultimately were merged into the text. The irregular, fragmentary, but pregnant work thus created, is, or should be, in the hands of all serious readers.

CHAPTER XI.

WAR AGAINST THE DOCTORS.

One of the most amusing and characteristic parts of the Essays is the persevering attack carried on against the Doctors. It was stimulated partly, as we have seen, by an old tradition in the family, and conducted in a humoristic way; but it was connected also with Montaigne's general scepticism, and his opposition to the formularism of his age. The great objection of literary men and thinkers to medicine has always been the arrogance of the doctors, their assumption of learning, their absoluteness, their determination to apply rules at all hazard in a manner which our studies of "the divers and undulating" nature of man, and our consideration of the fugitive circumstances which now envelope him and now disappear, teach us to be against reason in all departments. Montaigne did not understand Paracelsus, and was alarmed by Vesalius. The practice of anatomy may have appeared impious to him in some Catholic mood. He had read of the horrible dissections of live criminals, condemned by

Celsus, but practised at Rome, in the vain hope of discovering the mystery of life. Montaigne's way of speaking of the great revolutionist in medicine is remarkable. "They say," he writes, "that a newcomer, named Paracelsus, changes and overthrows all the order of the ancient rules of medicine, and maintains that up to this time it has only served to kill men. I think he will easily be able to prove this; but as to putting my life in his hands, I don't think it would be a mark of wisdom." The movement of Paracelsus was contemporary with Montaigne's childhood; and he must have been better known than this phrase would imply. But Montaigne was not the man to understand a reformer, who with the enthusiasm of faith united the manners of an impostor. Indeed this strange being has not been understood until our own day, when he is at last admitted to have been the first man who did in medicine what Rabelais and Montaigne did in morals,—the first to go direct to nature, without having anything whatever to do with the conventional maxims of the day.

About the year 1579, immediately before the publication of the first edition of the Essays, at the age of forty-seven, Montaigne wrote in substance:—"I am now seven or eight years older than when I commenced writing, not without gaining something new, for I have now got the colic (he means the nephritic colic, produced by the stone) from the liberality of years. It is difficult to have much to do with them without some such fruit. But I wish they had given

me anything else. This was the disease which from early childhood I most feared. However, during about eighteen months which I have suffered, I have already begun to get used to the pain, and even find grounds of consolation and hope; so apt are men to cling, under no matter what circumstances, to this wretched life. What a stupid humanity was that of Tamerlane, who killed all beggars he met, thinking he did them a favour by delivering them from life! The sufferings which simply touch the soul afflict me much less than they afflict most men, partly because the world thinks many things horrible, to be avoided even at the price of life, which are nearly indifferent to me; partly because my complexion is stupid and insensible, not moved except by what concerns myself: which complexion I consider one of the best pieces of my natural condition. But essential and corporal sufferings I feel more keenly. Yet, when I looked forward to them from the midst of that long and happy health which God gave me during the best part of my time, they seemed to me more insupportable than I find them. In truth, my fear was greater than the pain. *This strengthens in me every day the belief that most of the faculties of our souls, as we employ them, rather interfere with than assist the repose of life!*"

"I am seized by the worst of all diseases,—the most sudden, the most painful, the most mortal, and the most irremediable. I have already gone through five or six very long and painful attacks. However, either I flatter myself, or it is possible to sustain this

state, for him whose soul is freed from the fear of death; and freed also from the menaces, conclusions, and consequences with which medicine troubles us. But pain itself is not so keen that a solid man should be driven by it into rage and despair. This colic will do what remained to do in preparing me for death. It will detach me completely from this life, to which I hold by the love of life alone. God grant that it may not drive me to the other extreme, and make me wish for death!" Montaigne then apologises for those who by sighs, groans, and cries, and violent gestures, testify their struggle with pain. "What matters it if we wring our hands, so that we do not distort our minds?" For his part, however, he had met his disease with a better countenance than this, and was content to groan, but did not cry out. Either his pain, he says, was not so excessive, after all, or he had more firmness than common people. He complained when he was sharply pricked, but never went so far as despair. In the midst of his sufferings he was fond of examining himself, and he always found that he was capable of speaking, thinking, and answering as clearly as at any other hour, but not so constantly. "When they suppose me to be most cast down and spare me, I often try my strength, and start subjects of conversation quite foreign to my state. I can do everything by a sudden effort, but oh, take away duration. As soon as the pain passes I can return to my ordinary posture, for my soul is no otherwise affected than by the influence of the body; and

this I certainly owe to the care which I have always taken to prepare myself by reason for such accidents. It is true that I am tried somewhat severely, for I have suddenly passed from a very sweet and very happy condition of life to the most painful that can be imagined. The attacks come on so frequently that I am now scarcely ever in good health; yet up to this hour I keep my mind in such a state that, provided I can go on this way, I shall consider myself in a better condition of life than a thousand others, who have neither fever nor pain except what they give to themselves by the fault of their reason."

We have no ground for thinking that Montaigne gives other than a true account of the way in which he met the first attacks of the disease which troubled him all his life afterwards. It would, indeed, have been surprising if, after studying so long how to receive pain, and preparing himself for death so diligently, he had shown less fortitude than this.

Montaigne's father died of the stone, which seized him a few years before his death. The Essayist takes for granted that the disease was hereditary, though none of his brothers had it, and does not note that it attacked him when he went to live at Montaigne under the same circumstances as his father. He was not sufficient of an experimentalist for that. I have read in Coray's "Commentary on Hippocrates" that the stone is very frequent in some parts of France, where it is caused by not drinking sufficient water.

"My aversion to medicine," says Montaigne, "is

hereditary, like my disease. My ancestors detested medicine by some occult and natural inclination. The very sight of drugs was horrible to my father. However, if this had not been the case I should have tried to cultivate this antipathy. My reason confirms my instinct. But I do not refuse medicine because of its bad taste. Health is worth being bought at the price of all possible cauteries and incisions; but there are other appearances which make me suspect physic. I do not, however, deny that there may be an art of medicine, nor that among all the works of nature there are things proper for the preservation of our health. There are simples that have specific effects, as I know by experience; just as I know that mutton nourishes, and that wine warms. Solon said that food was, like other drugs, a medicine against a disease of hunger. [*"Içi on guérit la faim et la soif,"* in our days, says a French village cabaret.] I do not disavow the usage which we may derive from the world, nor doubt the power and fertility of nature, nor its application to our wants. I see that pike and sparrows find her treatment excellent, but I mistrust the inventions of our mind, of our science and art, for which we have abandoned nature and her rules, and which we wot not how to moderate. I know the glorious name of medicine and its promises to human nature, but its practice I neither honour nor esteem." Montaigne then goes on to say that experience made him doubt of physicians. None were so easily ill or cured with so much difficulty as those who were under their direction.

He had often been ill, and had always got through without their assistance. For this reason he cared not where he was, with or without aid, for he trusted to nothing but his own constitution. He accumulates instances of nations that lived without medicines, or with merely popular remedies. The villagers round about him whenever ill, no matter of what disease, always drank the strongest wine they could find, mixed with saffron and spices, and their system succeeded as well as any other. In fact, all the general arguments directed by homœopathy against positive medical science are to be found in Montaigne.

Montaigne criticises the manners of the doctors of his day, and grimly complains that in such disorders as his, for example, disdainfully taking advantage of human misery, they administered rats' dung and other such filth. He alludes to "him who had the throats of children cut in order to use their blood;" meaning, probably, Francis the Second, accused by the people of using this expedient, under the direction of his mother, to prolong his wretched life. I believe it was she who was said to have used a child's blood "to make a wash." In fact, Montaigne found that all the prejudices and superstitions of the ancients continued in practice up to his own time, with the addition of many others. Medicine, indeed, had become so confused and arbitrary, that it was rather a magical art than a science. He notices the recent introduction of gayac, sarsaparilla, and other drugs; but, as I have said, the revolutions attempted in his time—equivalent to the

revolutions in religion, philosophy, literature, and the arts,—by Paracelsus, Fioravanti, and Argenterius, he did not appreciate. As might have been expected, he takes a malicious pleasure in enumerating the mistakes of doctors. A kind of plague had ravaged the country in his neighbourhood shortly before, and carried away an infinite number of men. As soon as the storm was passed, a famous doctor published a pamphlet on the subject, and confessed that the chief cause of the mortality that took place was that the disease was met by bleeding, instead of some other remedy. Recently also, at Paris, a gentleman was cut for the stone, who had no such disease; and a bishop, a great friend of Montaigne, called him once to come and advise him whether he should comply with the wishes of the doctors, and consent to be cut. Montaigne, on the faith of others, persuaded him. When he was dead and opened they found his disease had some other seat. These and other accidents made Montaigne determine, whatever might happen, never to consent to the operation. "These doctors," he says, "don't know anything about the police of this little world. Because they would not stop a dysentery for fear of bringing on fever, they killed me a friend, who was worth more than them all put together!"

Among Montaigne's friends was the Baron de Caupène en Chalosse, son of the Maréchal Montluc. They enjoyed in common the right of patronage over a benefice of great extent, at the foot of the mountains (of Perigord) called Lahontan. "The inhabitants of

this corner, like those of the valley of Angrogna," says Montaigne, "had a life apart, ways, costumes, and manners apart. They were governed by certain private laws and customs, handed down from father to son, which they obey without any other constraint than their own reverence. This little state had continued from the most ancient times in a condition so happy, that no neighbouring judge had been called in to meddle with their affairs, no lawyer had been employed to give them advice, no stranger invited to settle their quarrels, and none of them had ever been reduced to beggary. They fled the alliances and commerce of the outer world, in order not to corrupt the purity of their government, until, as they say, one of them, (remembered by their fathers), having his mind pricked by a noble ambition, and desirous of bringing his name into credit and reputation, took it into his head to make one of his children, Maistre Jean, or Maistre Pierre; and having caused him to learn to write in some neighbouring city, turned him out at last as a fine village notary. This gentleman began to disdain the ancient customs of the place, and to suggest the pomp of the outward regions. The first of his compeers who lost a goat was counselled by him to appeal to the royal judges of the neighbourhood, and so on till all was bastardised. After this corruption, they say, there was introduced incontinently another still worse, by means of a doctor, who took a fancy to marry one of their girls and establish himself among them. He began to teach them first the names of fevers, rheums, tumours, the situation of the

heart, of the liver, and the intestines, of which they had no previous knowledge; and instead of garlic, with which they had learned to expel all sorts of ills, he taught them for a cough or for a chill to take strange mixtures, and dealt not only in their health, but also in their death. They swear that it is only since then that they have perceived that the night-air made their heads heavy, that drinking hot hurt them, that the winds of autumn were more injurious than those of spring; and that since the use of this medicine they have found themselves overwhelmed with a legion of unaccustomed diseases, perceive in general a falling off in their ancient vigour, and find their lives shortened by one half."

As Montaigne had many doctors among his friends, he thinks it necessary to say that he has seen many honest men in the medical profession worthy of being loved. It is not them he attacks, but their art; and he does not think them very wrong for taking advantage of human stupidity, for on these principles the greater part of the world was governed. He even called them in when he was ill, if they happened to be near, talked to them, and paid them like other people. But he never complied with their directions, unless they agreed exactly with his own common sense.

It is in the midst of this Essay on his disease that Montaigne introduces the dedication to Madame de Duras, of which I have already spoken. Writing to her he says that the doctors, when they despair of their patients, send them on a pilgrimage, or advise them to go to a watering-place. "Do not be angry, madame,"

he adds; "this does not allude to the watering-places in this country, which are all under the protection of your house—all Grammontoises." Montaigne himself was, to a great extent, a believer in medicinal baths. Many of his absences from his château, between the years 1571 and 1580, supposed by some to have been caused by political motives, were really employed in visiting the various watering-places in the Pyrenees. He preferred going to the baths where much company assembled, which were prettily situated and comfortably arranged for visitors, and mentions among these Bagnères. But he seems to have tried them all; as Aigues Caudes, on the mountain of Ossan, in Béarn; Barbotan, in the county of Armagnac; and Pressac, near Acques, in Gascony. It was partly because he felt no relief from these baths, though chiefly, perhaps, because he wished to see the effect of his Essays in Italy, that in the year 1580, immediately after he had done printing, he began to make preparations for the longest journey he had yet undertaken. He was a traveller, however, by nature; and, as we have seen, must have spent a great part of his time in moving to and fro. We must now, therefore, before accompanying him to Italy, make acquaintance with his manners on the road.

CHAPTER XII.

TRAVELS OF MONTAIGNE.

In Montaigne's days, despite the want of our modern means of communication, there was much moving to and fro; and France, although by no means equal to Germany in that respect, was tolerably well furnished with that essential thing to wayfarers—good hotels. Great care was taken with the government of these establishments. All aubergistes, cabaretiers, and taverniers were obliged to be provided with royal letters or licenses; and all places of rest for travellers had written over them in large characters, "Hostelerie, Cabaret, or Taverne, by permission of the king." There were auberges for foot-travellers and auberges for horse-travellers, each with fixed prices, written in a conspicuous manner outside; as "Dinner for a foot-traveller, six sols; bed for a foot-traveller, eight sols;" or else "Dinner for a horse-traveller, twelve sols; bed for a horse-traveller, twenty sols." A man travelling on horseback could not dine for six sols, and a foot-traveller was not allowed to be so extravagant as to

spend twelve. It is worth mentioning, as we shall principally have to deal with Montaigne on horseback, that when such a traveller could not pay his bill, the host had the alternative of sending him to prison or seizing his horse. In 1563, an ordonnance of the Parliament of Paris decreed that the hotel-keepers should disarm their hosts as soon as they entered, in order to check the sanguinary brawls that took place between parties of rival opinions.

In the sixteenth century there were a good many excellent roads in France, constructed principally by means of forced labour, in true Egyptian style, though sometimes out of the revenues of the provinces. But, once these high roads abandoned, the country was traversed by means of tracks. We learn a good deal from the Itineraries of the day, which tell you where on such a road the pavement commences or finishes, and where there is no road at all. In the latter case they become very communicative, advising you to "turn to the right," to "turn to the left," to "go above the village," or "below it," to "cross such a field," or "follow the ditches in such a direction," and so forth. They also tell what roads deserve the name of Chemins du Diable, or Rues d'Enfer; where brigandages have been committed, what passages are dangerous; and now and then significantly say, "Pass quickly." They do not forget to note what are the best hotels—the White House, or the Red House; where are to be found good beds, good wine, and good landlords; and even point out occasionally the curio-

sities of the country. "See the Leap of Regnault de Montauban," says one.

The great difficulty in travelling was the passage of rivers. There were comparatively few bridges — one of the most noted in France was at Bergerac, near Montaigne — and even ferries were not always found. A traveller often had to ford, or even swim a river. Montaigne mentions that he had swam rivers on horseback, and thought it not dangerous when the horse could get easily into the water, and there was a good landing-place. He did not like boat-travelling, considered the most luxurious in his days. He was very subject to sickness, but could stand a rough tossing about better than the slight jerk produced by the oars in calm weather. He was frequently, however, forced to travel in this way, and alludes often to sailing across streams, floating down, or ascending by means of the towing-rope. When he moved about with his family, he was often compelled to use what was called a *coche d'eau*, sometimes decked out in those days with flowers, in order to attract passengers. When he wished to go down to Blaye from Bordeaux, there was the gabarre, called "The Eel," which plied every morning, weather permitting.

Montaigne's Essays, from the very beginning, are full of allusions to his travels, and the benefit he derived from them. He tells us that when on the road, in order to profit by communication with others — one of the best schools possible — he always took care to bring those whom he met to talk about the

things with which they were best acquainted, about their trade and occupation, not about general subjects.

Elsewhere he ridicules the travelling of the nobility of his days. "Our French nobility," he says, "come back and tell us how many paces broad is the Sancta Rotonda, and what a beautiful pair of drawers the Signora Livia wore, and that the face of a Nero in such a ruin is longer or broader than in such a medal; but they never think of studying the manners of the nations they pass through." There is no point upon which Montaigne so much insists as on the advantage of travelling. He seems to think that there was no school so good; but admits that one of his own reasons for leaving his home was a vague and unquenchable desire of the unknown. As he grew old, indeed, he became restless and uneasy; and even persuaded himself that he should have liked to start away and travel all his life over the world, seeking a place of repose, but without feeling the obligation to return to his château. If any one asked him the reason of his voyages, he always replied: "I know well what I am, but I do not know what I seek." It appears that his friends, perhaps incited by Françoise de la Chassagne, thought him wrong after he was married, and when he began to get old, to continue to travel. But their reasonings had no effect upon him. Nothing could restrain him from riding out in search of intellectual adventures,—for material ones he always avoided. Though he never composed Essays except at home, he was always on the watch for

anecdote and illustration. He remembered, when he wrote, incidents that happened before he became a writer. "I was one day going to Orleans," he says, "and met on the plain this side of Clery, two Regents, on their way to Bordeaux, about fifty paces one before the other. Further behind I saw a large company, with a master at their head, who was no other than the late Count de la Rochefoucauld, [murdered at the Saint Bartholomew]. One of my people inquired of the first of these Regents (university professors) 'who was that gentleman who came behind?' He had not turned round to see the troop I mention, and thinking his companion was alluded to, answered drolly, 'He is not a gentleman; he is a grammarian, and I am a logician.'" Elsewhere Montaigne notices, as a vicious custom of his nation, that of stopping people on the road, and asking them who they were, and being offended by their refusal to answer.

Montaigne, as I have said, always travelled on horseback. He liked to have a considerable suite, and did not care much for expense. He entrusted, indeed, all money-matters to a servant, in whose honesty he had confidence — apparently the same who acted as his secretary. When he started for Italy he admits that he felt some pain at separating from his family; but he did not flinch, for he had not only to struggle for life but to enjoy his fame.

There is some obscurity about his first movements. He left his château on June 22, 1580; and seems to have gone straight to Paris. Probably he there

learned that his Essays were likely to give great offence to bigoted Catholic partisans, and in order to conciliate them he actually went and joined the army of Maréchal Matignon, which was besieging La Fère. On this occasion, at any rate, he acted as a soldier of the Ligue. He found many of his friends in the camp—among others the husband of the famous Corisande d'Andouins, the Count of Grammont. This gentleman was killed by a cannon-shot on the sixth of August, and Montaigne and many other persons set out for Soissons to accompany his body. The Essayist notes that the pomp and solemnity of their procession moved the people of the places through which they passed even to tears, although no one knew the name of the deceased.

After having shown his good will to the cause, Montaigne, exercising the privilege which gentlemen arrogated to themselves in those days of joining and quitting an army when they pleased, returned to Paris; and determined at once to set out for Germany and Italy.

CHAPTER XIII.

JOURNEY THROUGH FRANCE AND LORRAINE.

THE Journal of Montaigne's Travels was in part kept by a confidential servant, who noted down, sometimes in his own language, but generally under dictation, all the incidents that occurred, and all observations made. It is somewhat uncouth reading; and full of most minute details on the progress and symptoms of the traveller's disease. But it is very remarkable for its tone—so different from that adopted now-a-days, even by the most liberal and enlightened Frenchman as soon as he passes his frontier. There is no assumption of superiority, no vulgar contempt aroused by difference of manners—contempt analogous to that of the clown who sees a well-dressed stranger pass through his hamlet—no boasting, no impertinence; but a calm, equable, almost indifferent way of setting down facts, as if they referred to beings different in nature from him. Montaigne's philosophical meditations have borne good fruit. He sees his brother in the German, the Swiss, and the Italian, before he sees the German,

the Swiss, or the Italian. Even the Memoir-writers of that age have, it is true, something of this cosmopolite feeling, which has at last utterly disappeared; being forced out, as it were, by a series of prejudices cast into the French mind—as if you were to cast stones into a well and fill it to its brink, causing the water to overflow and be lost. But Montaigne's impartiality was so great, that his ignorant secretary absolutely mistook it for hatred towards his own country!

I shall rapidly sketch this journey, pausing every now and then to give specimens of the kind of observations Montaigne thought it important to record. We shall thus at the same time make farther acquaintance with the character of his mind, and obtain some insight into the manners of the generation which was called upon to read and relish the Essays. Montaigne's fame, we may infer, had already preceded him in many places. His work was published in the spring of 1580, and had had four or five months to circulate. In those days of eager, learned correspondence, this was more than sufficient, even in the absence of advertisements and reviews, to allow all choice spirits to learn the news.

We left Montaigne at the siege of La Fère. The Journal takes him up at Beaumont, whence he had just sent his brother, Mattecoulon, to inquire after the health of a certain Count, who had been wounded; but, as it appeared, not mortally. Here M. d'Estissac joined the party, accompanied by "a gentleman, a valet-de-chambre, a mule, a muleteer on foot, and also

two valets." The gentleman appears to have been M. de Hautoy. Montaigne had the same suite, and it was agreed to share expenses. Leaving Beaumont on the fifth of September, 1580, they went to sup at Meaux; where, among other curiosities, they visited the Abbey of St. Faron, and the tomb of Ogier the Dane, and another of his Paladins. "In the treasury are the bones of those knights. The upper bone of the arm is about the length of the whole arm of an ordinary man in these days, and a little longer than that of M. de Montaigne."

The traveller made a point of visiting all learned men who lived by the way. At Meaux he called on Juste Terrelle, and examined his library and garden. Two or three days afterwards he was at Espernai, seeking, in the church of Notre Dame, for the tomb of Strozzi, whom he had seen killed when young at the siege of Thionville. "It was the custom," however, of Montaigne and D'Estissac to go to mass at every opportunity: the former, indeed, could not by any means afford to neglect that duty. After the service Montaigne went up to Maldonat, a famous Jesuit, and talked learnedly with him both there and after dinner, to which he invited him at the hotel. The baths of Spa formed also a subject of copious conversation. The Jesuit brought with him a maistre d'hôtel of M. de Nevers, who gave to Montaigne a printed statement on the difference between his master and the Duke of Montpensier, as to the *Baillée des Roses* in the Parliament, "in order that he might know the facts, and be

able to instruct gentlemen who were inquisitive on the subject."

At Vitri le François Montaigne learned three memorable histories:—first, that Antoinette de Bourbon, mother of the Great Guise, was still living, aged eighty-seven, and able to walk a quarter of a league a day; second, that a girl had just been hung for disguising herself with several companions in male costume, and carrying the joke so far as to marry a damsel of the neighbourhood; third, the odd story, to be found in the Essays, of Marie Germain, who was changed suddenly from a female to a male, and rebaptized by the Cardinal of Lenoncourt. Ambroise Paré believed this story; and the girls of Vitri hummed about the streets a song, warning one another to be careful how they trod, for fear of metamorphosis!

After passing Bar, "where M. de Montaigne had formerly been," the traveller suffered a good deal, and determined to hasten to the Baths of Plombières. At Donremy they learned that "the descendants of Joan of Arc" had received letters of nobility: the front of the house where she was born was covered with paintings, representing her high deeds, but much damaged by time. Further on a visit was paid to the nuns of Poussay, of an order established for the education of daughters of great families. Children at nurse were received. The nuns were not bound to celibacy; and gentlemen who wished to marry them could go and court them if they pleased. In general, however, they

were too satisfied with their condition to desire a change.

At Plombières Montaigne resolved to stay some time, drinking the waters and taking baths. His secretary everywhere describes most minutely his regimen and its effect. But I shall rarely allude to this subject, it being sufficient to remember that Montaigne was a valetudinarian in search of health, believing not in doctors, but a good deal, in spite of affected incredulity, in the virtues of mineral waters. The baths were usually deserted after August, but the weather was so fine that year that some company still remained. Among others whose acquaintance Montaigne made in the bath-room was the Seigneur d'Andelot, formerly in the service of Charles the Fifth, and governor for him of St. Quentin. One side of his beard and one eyebrow were white; and he related that this change came to him in an instant one day as he was sitting at home, with his head leaning on his hand, in profound grief at the loss of a brother, executed by the Duke of Alba as accomplice of Counts Egmont and Horne. When he looked up and uncovered the part which he had clutched in his agony, the people present thought that flour had been sprinkled over him.

Montaigne lodged at the sign of the "Angel," which was near the two baths; and commends the good cookery, the comparative cheapness, and the comfort of the place. He liked the fashion of rooms communicating not through the partition walls, but by means of an outside gallery. "The wine and bread

are bad," he says; "but 'tis a good nation, free, sensible, and serviceable. All the laws of the country (Lorraine) are religiously observed." Montaigne gives in full a quaint series of bye-laws for the regulation of the watering-place. According to its provisions, the repression of minor offences was left in the hands of the Protestant Germans, "as of old;" but they were enjoined to be impartial, and to avoid "uttering blasphemy and irreverent words against the Catholic Church and its traditions:" no one was to carry arms, to use insulting words, or give the lie to any one; no public women were to come within five hundred yards of the baths under penalty of the whip; no dames, demoiselles, women, or girls, were to be insulted by men, verbally or otherwise, in the water, (where men were in drawers and women in chemises); at night modesty and silence were enjoined, without noise, scandal, or derision—such was the will and pleasure of Claude de Rynach, Bailly des Vosges, representing the Duke of Lorraine.

Montaigne remained ten days at Plombières. On departing, he commanded his secretary to leave an escutcheon of his arms in wood,—which a painter of the place had executed for an écu—in the charge of the hostess, who undertook to have it fixed carefully to the wall of the bath outside. This was "according to the humour of the nation"—not, of course, to satisfy Montaigne's vanity. At Remiremont was found good treatment at the "Unicorn." Here was a famous convent of nuns, of the same order as those of Poussay.

The abbesses pretended to the sovereignty of Remiremont. MM. d'Estissac and Montaigne visited them at once. They were in the midst of the excitement of an election: Renée d'Inteville, the abbess, had just died; and Barbe de Salme was a claimant for the post. Her ambition was successful, and she held her place for more than twenty years.

The oldest nun of the convent was of the house of Ludre. Hearing that Montaigne was at Plombières she sent her compliments to him, with some artichokes, partridges, and a barrel of wine. He made a call in return for this civility; and learned in conversation that certain neighbouring villages were bound to pay the convent as rent, on every day of Pentecost, two basins of snow, or a cart with a yoke of four white oxen: the snow had never yet failed. Next day the party was already in the saddle, when the same old lady asked for another interview with Montaigne. Having learned that he was going to Rome, the nuns had talked over the matter, and requested him to take charge of their affairs and act as their attorney!

At Bossan Montaigne and d'Estissac, dressed in linen garments lent to them for the purpose, visited some deep silver mines belonging to the Duke; and afterwards, having been shown the eyries of the vultures on inaccessible rocks, and passed the sources of the Moselle, entered Germany at Than.

CHAPTER XIV.

JOURNEY THROUGH SWITZERLAND AND GERMANY.

THE extent of the vineyards was the first thing that struck the Gascon travellers on their way to Mulhouse. At that city Montaigne made haste to visit the church, "for the people were not Catholics," and found it but little changed. He took infinite delight at beholding the liberty and good police of that nation; and was interested to see his "host of the Grape" return from presiding at the Town Council, held in a magnificent gilded palace, to serve him at table. At Bâle, the government showed that they knew how to appreciate the distinguished strangers who had come among them. An officer was sent with a present of wine, and made a long speech to them as they sat at table; to which Montaigne replied also in a very long speech, in presence of many Germans and Frenchmen who happened to be there. The landlord acted as interpreter! This must have been an amusing scene.

Montaigne visited the house of Dr. Felix Platerus, deliciously painted *à la Françoise*, and found that he

had invented a system of preserving plants glued upon paper — the *herbarium*. He saw also many other learned people, as Grynceus, the author of some well-known *Theatrum*, and Francis Hottoman, who had escaped from the Saint Bartholomew. The people did not seem to agree in their religious opinions, some calling themselves Zuinglians, others Calvinists, others Martinists (or Lutherans). Montaigne made queries on all sides, "and thought that many were still Catholics at heart." The question of the Sacrament was not discussed by the ministers, as likely to lead to dissension. Outside the churches the images were left entire, and even the old tombs, "though covered with prayers for the dead."

Montaigne is particular in noticing the progress of what we may call material civilisation. From Espernay to Bâle, even the meanest village house had glass panes to the windows. Iron was abundant; so were good workmen in that article. "They surpass us in this by much," says Montaigne. "The smallest church, moreover, has a magnificent clock." He admired the tiles with which the roofs and floors were covered; and the delicate stoves covered with porcelain. But they cared "more for their dinners than for anything else;" for whereas their dining-rooms were superb, their chambers were mean; no curtains to the beds, three or four beds side by side in the same room; no chimneys; no means of making a fire except in the public room; no wooden shutters over the glass; dirty sheets, —all these things are made the subject of complaint.

But the cookery, especially of fish, is praised. The wines were delicate, but "the gentlemen found them weaker without water than those of Gascony with." The servants ate at the table with their masters; and the service was altogether conducted in a novel manner. Horse-radish was eaten with roast meat. Fresh-water lobsters were in great request. People washed their hands at a little spout in the corner of the room, as in French monasteries. The plates were almost always of wood—from custom, not poverty; for by their side were great silver tankards in profusion. All wooden articles of furniture, even the ceilings, were furbished and kept bright. Montaigne here, for the first time, saw smoke-jacks in use. People sat for hours at table; "and in truth, he observes, they eat less hastily than we do, and in a more wholesome manner." The cost of living was about the same as in France about Paris.

Montaigne went afterwards to Baden, where he found magnificent hotels. There were three hundred mouths to feed daily in the one where he lodged. The town seemed to him very handsome; for, besides that the streets were broader and opener than in France, the squares vaster, and the windows richly furnished with glass, they were accustomed to paint the outside of the houses and load them with very agreeable devices. No town, moreover, was richer in fountains. The baths were well arranged; and Montaigne says that ladies could with propriety be taken there, as they could have a room to themselves. The people of the country sat all day long in the water eating and drinking.

At Baden Montaigne made acquaintance with a Swiss gentleman, who was in the French service. He talked with him for a whole day on Swiss politics; and was shown a letter from Harlay de Sanci, the French Ambassador, naming this gentleman as his substitute whilst he went to meet Catherine de Medici at Lyons. The Secretary describes the departure of this political agent with four horses, one for himself, one for his valet, one for his son, and one for his daughter, a tall, beautiful girl, who had a cloth housing, a French stirrup, with a porte-manteau behind, a band-box at the saddle-bow, and no woman servant, though she had two long days' journey before her. "I think," says Montaigne, "that the dress of the women about here is as clean and nice as ours: their own hair hangs down in braids behind; and if you playfully knock off their caps they are not offended!" He had tried that game, I suppose. "The younger girls, instead of caps, wear nothing but garlands of flowers on their heads. . . . In saluting them you must kiss your hand, and offer to touch theirs. If you take off your hat, or bow ever so, they don't understand it; and remain for the most part bolt upright: some bend their heads a little. They are in general beautiful women, tall and fair."

Montaigne observed that they were a good sort of people to those who knew how to adapt themselves to their manners. For his part, "in order to experience to their full extent the diversity of manners and usages," he always got himself served according to the custom of the country he was in, however inconvenient

it might be. In Switzerland, the only things that annoyed him were the napkins, half-a-foot square; but then every man had a wooden spoon with a silver handle, and always carried a knife about with him. "A Swiss," he observes, "rarely puts his fingers in the dish." This reminds us of the primitive ways of France in those times, when forks were not. Montaigne was delighted with the rooms warmed with stoves, and at last came to sleep in one. Stoves he preferred to fires: "At any rate, we don't burn our faces and our boots before them, and are quit from the smoke that torments us in France."

Among the more important observations made here was this: such Catholic towns as remained in Protestant countries, or near Protestant towns, were much more strict and devout, in consequence of the neighbourhood of the contrary opinion. The secretary quotes Montaigne's observation that such would always be the case; whereas when divisions took place in the same town nothing but confusion could arise. He talked to a minister from Zurich, who told him that the people in his parts were originally Zuinglians, but that they had recently inclined towards Calvinism, a gentler sect. As to predestination, they remained midway between Geneva and Augsburg; but did not bother their people with this discussion. For his own part, he remained a Zuinglian, because that sect seemed to him to be nearer primitive Christianity, We shall often find the traces of these studies of contemporary doctrine in the Essays.

On leaving Baden, Montaigne observes: "the natives are a little tyrannical in exacting payment; as, indeed, are all nations—among others the French—towards strangers." He is very particular in noticing all regulations that affected the comfort of life, or indicated the development or otherwise of material civilisation. The watchmen of Baden patrolled about, not only on the look-out for thieves, but for fire and other dangers, and called the hours at night one to the other. The women washed by the river-side, and furbished plate much better than in French hôtels. But I shall not mention all the traits of manners, the engines and arrangements of various kinds that Montaigne describes, it being sufficient to characterise him to say that such things attracted his attention. He complains of the stupidity of the people of the country, who did not know their own curiosities. When I went first to Bordeaux to study this matter, the hôtel-guide did not know the existence of the public library for which I asked.

Continuing his journey, Montaigne noticed the cataracts of the Rhine, which he compared to those of the Nile; avoided Zurich because the plague was reported to be there; and came to Schaffhausen, where he invited the burgomaster to dinner. "The time passed not without many ceremonious harangues on both sides." A learned man of the country told Montaigne, that though some of the rich were much in the French interest, the people were violently opposed.

"The Rhine spreads out to a marvellous width, like

our Garonne at Blaye, and then narrows until we reach Constance." Montaigne scarcely ever comes to a place without noticing what religion was predominant there; and remarks when the stone crosses increased or decreased by the wayside. This novel spectacle of two rival developments of one creed,—which he sometimes felt convinced, until scepticism of reason brought him back to doubt, was a delusion,—particularly interested him. The work of his life, in as far as he cared to influence the world, was, not to reconcile these two hostile sects, but to persuade them to live quietly side by side, without seeking to tear each other to pieces. We need not wonder, therefore, if he was anxious for practical experience of a state which was thought impossible in France.

"Constance," he says, "is Catholic, though it was held for thirty years by the Lutherans, who were dislodged forcibly by Charles the Fifth. The images in the churches still bear traces of this. The Bishop, who is a gentleman of the country and a Cardinal, resides at Rome, and derives at least fifty thousand écus of revenue. There are canonries in the church of Notre Dame worth at least five thousand florins, which are occupied by gentlemen. I saw one on horseback coming in from the country, dressed very freely like a man of war. It is true there are many Lutherans in the city." . . . . "We noticed that we were quitting the Swiss country, because a little before reaching the city we saw many gentlemen's houses, of which there are few in Switzerland. But as to

private houses, both in town and country, they are, without comparison, handsomer than in France." Montaigne notices often the simplicity of the Swiss, who, not from poverty but choice, thatched their dwellings, and mixed wooden plates with silver goblets.

Montaigne was lodged "very badly" at the "Eagle," whose landlord gave them a specimen of "German freedom and barbarian pride," on occasion of a quarrel of one of his foot-valets with the guide from Baden. The matter was carried before the judges, to whom the traveller, accustomed, no doubt, to absolute servility in France, went and complained. The Provost was an Italian gentleman, who, when Montaigne asked if his own servants would be allowed to witness in his favour, replied "Yes," if he discharged them for the moment, and took them into his service immediately afterwards. "This was a remarkable subtlety," he writes. Next day he removed to the sign of the "Pike," where he was well treated.

Having passed Smardorff, "a little Catholic town," on the 10th of October, the traveller was induced, by the beauty of the weather, to change his design of going to Ravensberg that day, and turn aside to Lindau. The party started early. "M. de Montaigne never breakfasted, but they always brought him a piece of dry bread, which he ate by the way, adding sometimes a bunch of grapes, for the vintage was then going on, the country being full of vines. They trail them on poles, which make beautiful green alleys, very agreeable to see."

At Lindau two religions were followed, and Montaigne visited the Catholic and Protestant places of worship, both of which he calls churches. All Imperial towns, if the people willed it, could, he says, exercise Catholicism or Lutheranism, according to the will of the inhabitants. "They apply themselves, more or less, to the one they favour. At Lindau were only two or three Catholics, as the Curé told M. de Montaigne. Yet the priests are allowed their revenue free, and do their office, as do likewise the Nuns who are there. The said Sieur de Montaigne spoke also to the Minister, from whom he learned nothing save that he shared the common hatred against the Zuinglians and Calvinists. It seems, in truth, that there are few cities which have not something peculiar in their belief; and under the authority of Martin, whom they receive as their chief, they carry on many disputes on the interpretation of the sense of Martin's writings!"

At the "Crown," Montaigne tried, as an experiment, a *coite*, or bag of eider-down, as a covering for his bed, and highly approved of the custom. He enters into details, highly illustrative by their length of his character, on the way in which the table was supplied, — enumerates the sauces, the kinds of bread, the game, the roast and the boiled, and then adds a regret that he had forgotten three things in preparing for his journey: first and foremost, to bring a cook with him, to teach him foreign cookery, and be able to introduce new dishes at home; second, to engage a German valet, or seek the acquaintance of a gentleman of the

country (for it was very inconvenient to be at the mercy of a rascal of a guide); and third, to look at the books which gave information on the rare and remarkable things to be seen in each place. "He should, at least, have brought a Munster, or some such book, in his coffers." . . . . "He mingled with his judgment, it is true," says his secretary, referring, apparently, to some depreciatory remarks his master had made on French cookery, "a little passion, from contempt of his country, which he hated, and turned his heart from for other considerations; but yet, it is true that he preferred the commodities of that country, without comparison, to those of France, and conformed to them so far as actually to drink his wine without water. In a regular drinking bout, however, he never joined, and was only invited to do so courteously." The Germans, apparently, did not imitate the "Let him drink and die!" of the Polish bibbers. Among themselves it was a crime to leave a goblet empty an instant; and no water was served, even to those who asked for it, "unless they were very much respected." "These people are proud, passionate, and drunken; but they are not," said M. de Montaigne, "traitors or thieves."

The party now turned direct towards Trent, and passed through Isne, where Montaigne, "according to his custom," immediately called on a doctor of theology, and invited him to dinner. They appear to have had a very subtle discourse on the sacrament, of which it is unnecessary to repeat even the outline.

Montaigne dived into his mind, and found him to be actually guilty of leaning towards the Ubiquists.

Kempten, the Essayist compares to Sainte-Foi. This name makes his thoughts revert quite home, and he pays a tacit compliment to his wife; for he says that the pewter plates were "as well scoured as at Montaigne!" . . . . "In this part of the country," says the secretary, "we have now plenty of linen. I have always been able to hang up curtains to his bed; and if one towel has not been sufficient, I have been able to get him many."

Montaigne went to the Lutheran church, fitted up much as usual. During the sermon he noticed, that whenever the name of Jesus Christ was mentioned, both preacher and people took off their hats. There was a marriage very simply conducted. The minister stood against the altar with a book in his hand. A young woman, with her hair flowing loosely, came up and made a little curtsey, and remained standing alone: a little time after came a lad, with a sword by his side, a sort of artisan, and stood at her elbow. The minister whispered a few words in their ear, then made each say the Lord's Prayer, and then began to read out of the book certain rules for people who were going to marry. Then he joined their hands, without allowing them to kiss.

Having settled this matter, Johannes Tillianus, for such was his name, came and talked long with Montaigne, and took him to his house. As they were going out of the church they heard the violins and tam-

bourines preceding the new-married couple. Montaigne asked if dancing were permitted by them; alluding, no doubt, to the extreme rigidity of the Calvinists, which so repelled French taste!

"Why not?" exclaimed the good Johannes.

"And how comes it," continued our Essayist, "that I see fresh-painted pictures of Jesus Christ, and other personages?"

"We do not forbid images that serve to remind men," was the answer; "but we only forbid the adoration of them."

"Why, then, have the old pictures been removed?"

"They were not removed by us, but by the Zuinglians,"—"incited by the Evil Spirit," adds the secretary, who also notes: "We had been given the same answer before; and the doctor at Isne, when my master asked if he hated the figure and effigy of the cross, exclaimed, suddenly, 'How could I be such an atheist as to hate that figure, so happy and glorious for Christians?' These be devilish opinions."

Johannes Tillianus said very cavalierly, in the midst of his dinner, that he would rather hear a hundred masses than participate in the communion of Calvin. "Here," adds the secretary to Montaigne, in his jumbled way, "they served us white hares at table!" Further on he says they were always quarrelling with their hosts, who, in a country "where ten thousand pine-trees were not worth fifty sous," would never allow them to light a fire to air their linen morning and evening.

Montaigne turned away once more from the direct road to Trent at Frienten, and determined to make a circuit and see some other German towns. He continues to note chiefly things that concerned the table and the Church. At Lanspergs, belonging to the Duke of Bavaria, "if any one thought of any other religion than the Roman, he was obliged to hold his peace." The country of toleration was now past.

As if for their reception, all the towns had just been newly painted!

Augsburg was reached by a broad plain, like that of the Beauce. It was esteemed the handsomest city in Germany. The first thing noticed was a sort of stair-carpet put down to protect from the dirt the steps of the winding staircase, which had just been washed. There was actually not a spider to be seen, and no dirt; and people who chose, had curtains to their windows! Cloths were hung by the side against the walls, that they might not be spit upon, and so spoiled. Everything showed cleanliness. The windows were not fixed as in France, but moveable.

Montaigne went to a Lutheran church "without images, or organs, or crosses;" and minutely describes the service and the ceremony of baptism. The crowd was great; but they "saw no beautiful women." After dinner they went to a fencing-exhibition, and had to pay on entry. Here it was, as I have observed in speaking of an earlier period of Montaigne's life, that "for certain reasons," he determined to appear other than he was, forbade that their rank should be revealed,

and walked alone all day through the city. "He believed," says his secretary, "that this served to make him honoured all the more. When he passed by the church of Notre Dame, being very cold (for the cold had begun to be sharp ever since leaving Kempten), he held, *without thinking* of it, his handkerchief up to his face—*believing* that, being thus alone and very poorly dressed, no one would notice him." This is a very confused account, and I cannot doubt that something is concealed from us. The hiding of the face by the handkerchief is first stated to be accidental, or meant as a protection from the cold, and then it is admitted Montaigne wanted to avoid notice. I have already mentioned the explanation that once occurred to me of this. The secretary goes on: "When they became more familiar with him, he was told that the people of the church had thought this behaviour odd. In fine, he was guilty of what he always especially avoided —rendered himself remarkable by ways contrary to the taste of those who saw him; for inasmuch as in him lies he conforms himself to the manners of the place he happens be in, and wore at Augsburg a padded cap on his head in the streets."

When the presence of Montaigne and D'Estissac became known the corporation sent to them, for their supper, fourteen great vessels full of wine. These were carried by seven sergeants in livery and an honourable officer, who was invited to supper, as was the custom. "It is also the custom," says the journal, "to give the porters something: he gave them an ecu."

The officer who supped with them said to M. de Montaigne, that when strangers arrived, care was taken to ascertain their qualities, and presents were given accordingly. "They took us for barons and knights," is the naïve comment. Montaigne's spirits seem now to have been reviving. He was looking out for pretty women at the churches! Here comes another note on their absence: "We saw not a single beautiful face;" and this class of observation henceforth becomes more frequent. Françoise was far away; for, despite the boasts in the Essays, perhaps sometimes intended to "vex" her, I very much doubt whether Montaigne would have ventured on infidelity, even in thought, near home. A young girl, rich and "ugly," was married in the church. Montaigne went to the ball and received the courtesies and kisses of the dancers. Then he turns his attention once more to mechanical contrivances; and after dwelling with pleasure on an elaborate practical joke prepared against ladies in the shape of secret fountains in a floor, quells the tumult of sensation by talking of aviaries, glass houses, and other matters of the kind. He visited a postern gate, so curious and so renowned, that Queen Elizabeth had sent to have it examined, but her envoy had been refused admission.

At the church of Sainte-Croix, Montaigne went and saw, under a glass case, a little piece of red substance, stated to be a consecrated wafer changed into real flesh by a miracle: "of which many testimonies were alleged." Close by was the Lutheran Church.

"Here, as elsewhere, these people have lodged themselves, and erected dwellings, as it were, in the cloisters of the Catholic churches." Montaigne visited the Jesuits, and found some of them to be very learned.

Winter was now rapidly coming on, and it became necessary to think of passing into Italy. Montaigne would have gone, however, to see the Danube at Ulm, but that he should have been obliged to retrace his steps a portion of the way. "He always avoided, if possible, treading the same road twice." The secretary left an escutcheon of the arms of Montaigne at the door of the room where he lodged: cost two écus for the painter, and twenty sous the carpenter. Of course this was again to comply with the customs of the place.

The party stayed a day at Munich, and proceeded on their journey. "The Jesuits, who chiefly govern this country," says Montaigne, "have made a great stir and have got into odium with the people, for having forced the priests to drive away their concubines under heavy penalties; and to hear them complain, it would seem that formerly the practice had been so completely tolerated as to be considered legitimate: they are still making remonstrances on the subject to the Duke." A lady, near whose house Montaigne lodged, sent him some of her wine.

After having passed over the Yser, the party began to ascend; and at last "penetrated into the very entrails of the Alps by an easy road, excellently kept. The weather was fine and clear." A beautiful little mountain-lake attracted their attention. Here and

there, amidst the rocks, were pleasant fields with châlets. Thus they entered the Tyrol.

Montaigne was much struck by the aspect of this province. The Valley of the Inn appeared to him "the most agreeable passage he had ever seen—sometimes narrowing, the mountains almost touching, and then widening, now on the left of the river where the road was, now on the other, so that there were slopes, more or less steep, to cultivate. In many places there were two or three stories of plains, one above the other, all full of fine gentlemen's houses and churches. On one side, on a rock, inaccessible except by means of ropes, was raised a crucifix." In due time Montaigne reached Innspruck, where he finds little to note the first day, except the bed-curtains, the sheets, and the price of fish.

One of the palaces of Ferdinand, archduke of Austria, was in the neighbourhood, and Montaigne, who had missed seeing the Duke of Bavaria at Munich, like a true courtier, resolved to "kiss his hands." But when he presented himself, a certain Count told him the Archduke was busy in the council-chamber. Not rebutted, Montaigne returned to the charge after dinner, and found him in a garden—"at least," says the journal, "we thought we caught a glimpse of him; yet those who went towards him to tell him the gentlemen were there, and what for, brought back word that he wished to be excused, but that next day would be more convenient. If, however, they wanted anything, let them speak to a certain Milanese Count. This coldness,

added to the fact that they were not permitted to see the castle, offended M. de Montaigne a little; and as he complained of this the same day to an officer of the house, he was told that the said Prince had observed that he did not care to see Frenchmen, and that the House of France was inimical to him."

Proceeding on his way, Montaigne insists again on the picturesqueness of the scenery, and records the minute physical incidents of the journey. The women were dressed so like the men, that the Essayist, pretending to make a mistake, went up to a beautiful young wench in a church and asked her if she could speak Latin! The secretary gravely sets down: "He took her for a student;" but let us be sure, that had she been ugly the mistake, though more natural, would not have been made. At the same place he invited to the inn the Magister of the place, "but found him," he says, "to be such an ass, that he could get nothing from him." During this part of the journey he suffered much from his disease, and we have the record of his colics.

At Brixen the country is described. "The plain around is not broad, but the mountains on all sides rise with such a gentle slope that they can be *brushed and combed* (is this a valet's expression?) to the very top. Everywhere we see steeples and villages far up; and near the city are many fine houses, well built and pleasantly situated. M. de Montaigne said, 'that all his life he had mistrusted the judgment of others as to the conveniences of foreign parts, for usually people

only relish what they are accustomed to in their own villages; and he therefore cared little for information given by travellers. But in this place he still more marvelled at their stupidity; for he had heard it said, even during the present journey, that the passage of the Alps at this point is full of difficulties, that the manners of the people would be found strange, the roads inaccessible, the lodgings wretched, the air insupportable. As to the air, he thanked God it had proved so mild; for it was rather inclined to be warm than cold; and during all this journey, until now, we have only had three days of cold, and about one hour of rain. For the rest, if he wished to take about his daughter, who is now only eight years old, he would as soon have charge of her on this road as in the alley of his garden. As to the lodgings, he had never seen a country in which they were handsomer and more thickly strewn: for we had every day found handsome towns, well supplied with provisions and wine, even cheaper than elsewhere.'"

Montaigne's description of the Tyrol is excellent. He constantly recurs to the peculiarity of mountainous countries, which most strikes a dweller in plains—the ledges of cultivation one above the other, all inhabited; and mentions a castle on a lofty mountain, which belonged to a baron who had a fine estate and hunting-ground aloft. From Bolzan, an ugly, ill-built town, "which showed they were beginning to leave Germany," Montaigne wrote to Francis Hottoman, whom he had seen at Basle. He said that

"he had taken great pleasure in visiting Germany, that he abandoned it with great regret, though it was to Italy he was going; that strangers had to suffer there, as elsewhere, from the exactions of landlords: but he thought this might be cured by the traveller, who should take care not to put himself in the power of guides and interpreters, who betray them. In every other respect he found all kinds of convenience and courtesy." If we would understand Montaigne the Essayist and Montaigne the Man—not always the same person—we must compare this fragment of a letter with his assertion that he never interfered with money matters in travelling, and left all, in a lordly manner, to his secretary. He was sincere in his theory, but too meddlesome by nature always to carry it out. Whilst writing to a learned friend, we see that he is actually still smarting from the heavy bills he has had to pay. Yet put his Essay-pen in his hand, and he will be at once convinced that such petty concerns do not occupy him. Is this absurd or unusual? When a party of travellers has passed an uneasy night, the only one who has snored from eve till morn sometimes honestly professes not to have slept a wink; and a terrible chatterer frequently passes through life with the conviction that he is eminently a silent man. Biographers of Montaigne have not sufficiently remembered this unconsciousness of men to their own defects; and have registered all the statements of Montaigne, who meant to be impartial, as if he was really so.

CHAPTER XV.

FROM TRENT TO PADUA.

On leaving the Tyrol, Montaigne entered Italy at Trent. As might have been foreseen, there is no trace in his journal of the enthusiasm, real or affected, which most travellers bring with them to that land; and which is oftener the echo of modern romantic literature than connected with classical reminiscences. The Essayist looked upon the country beyond the Alps as somewhat common-place—said that every valet could discourse of Florence and Ferrara—and affected even to restrain the little anxiety he might have felt to behold the scenes where the ancients, whom he admired so genuinely, lived and acted. I shall note his chief observations, and the reader who knows the Italy of the handbooks will be surprised to find how much it resembles the Italy of the sixteenth century.

The first thing that attracted remark was the difference in the aspect of the towns. "Trent," says the journal, "is a little larger than Agen, but is not pleasant, and has narrow and tortuous streets; indeed, it

bears no comparison with the beauty of the German cities. Two leagues before reaching it the Italian language had begun; but at Trent both languages were spoken, and there was a quarter of the city entirely German, with a church and preacher of its own. As to "the new religions," nothing more had been heard of them since Augsburg.

The party which lodged at "the Rose," "a good hotel," visited the new church of Our Lady, where the famous Council had recently been held; and admired a marvellous organ adorned with automata. The church had been built in 1520 by Cardinal Clesio, a native of the place. "M. de Montaigne," says the secretary, "remarked that on this journey he had observed more than one instance of citizens benefiting the place of their birth." The same Cardinal had built also a new wing to the château, adorned very richly in the interior with statues and paintings; among others, a nocturnal fête with torches, which Montaigne admired very much. And yet, in spite of this generosity to the public, and many other instances, no respect had been paid to him after his death, and he was very wretchedly buried.

On leaving Trent, the party followed the widening valley between lofty uninhabited mountains, with the Adige on its right hand; and continued travelling until late at night. Up to this time Montaigne had arranged the journey so methodically, that he and his companions were out on this occasion after dark for the first time.

At Rovero they found German neatness in rooms and furniture; and not only German windows, but German

stoves also. The beds were adorned with curtains in festoons, very comfortably; but, unfortunately, without those *coites* which were used as a covering in Germany. Freshwater lobsters failed, however, here; which M. de Montaigne noticed, because, since Plombières, for nearly two hundred leagues they had never seen a meal served up without them. Instead were served snails, and a salad of truffles sliced, with—for the taste of our fastidious traveller—oranges, citrons, and olives.

Montaigne seems here to have given a singular instance of the uncertainty of his resolutions, unless we suppose the working of some secret feeling—perhaps of fear, lest the reception of the audacious sceptic in the stronghold of Catholicism might not be agreeable. On the very threshold of Italy he talked of going back towards Cracow, or turning aside to visit Greece! Here the secretary, no doubt setting down the substance of what his master spoke, says, that if Montaigne had been alone with his suite, he would certainly have undertaken some such bold journey. "But he could never communicate to any other of the company the pleasure which he found in visiting unknown countries, and which was so great as to make him forget his age and the weakness of his health. All the others talked rather of going back. As for Montaigne, he was accustomed to say, that after having passed a restless night, the mere remembrance in the morning that he had a new city or country to see made him start out of bed full of desire and joy. I never saw him less weary or complain less of his sufferings: his mind, on

the road or in the hotels, was always strained towards novelty; and he sought every opportunity to converse with strangers: which, I think, beguiled his pain. When the others complained that he often led them by divers roads and across country, returning often towards the starting-point — which he used to do when he obtained information of something worth seeing, or when for some reason he changed his opinion — he would answer that, for his part, the place where he was was the object of his journey; that he could not mistake or lose his way, for his only object was to wander through unknown places; and that, provided he did not twice go over the same road, or visit twice the same place, his design was accomplished. As for Rome, which was the aim of the others, he by so much the less desired to see it, that it was already known to every one; and there was never a lackey who could not give them news of Florence or Ferrara. He used also to compare himself to one who might be reading a fine book, or a very pleasant story, and be seized with fear lest it should soon come to an end: for he took such delight in travelling, that he hated the neighbourhood of the place which promised him repose. He often planned how he would travel at his ease if he could contrive to be alone."

From Rovero the whole party, leaving all their servants, started with hired horses to visit the Lake of Garda. They slept at Torbole, and next day crossed in a boat to Riva, where they saw nothing but an old tower and, by accident, the lord of the place, Signor

Hortimato Madruccio, brother of the Cardinal of Trent. On returning, they talked much of the wonderful prospect of the lake, shut in by the aridest mountains they had yet seen. Next day all their baggage was put upon rafts, to float down the Adige to Verona; and Master Secretary had charge thereof, so that he parted company with Montaigne. His master, however, gave him afterwards a summary account of what took place during their ride to Verona. Among other things Montaigne asked somebody if the Tyrol were anything else besides the valley they had descended, and the mountains on either side. They told him there were many valleys, all containing large and handsome cities; and compared the country to a drapery gathered up in folds. "If it was spread out, the Tyrol would be a very extensive country." All the places on the way to Verona were small, and the inns wretched. At Volarno a maiden lady, sister of the absent lord, sent some wine to M. de Montaigne. Had she already heard of the Essays? The secretary remarks, that except the southern extremity of the lake of Garda which belonged to the Signoria of Venice, and was full of parks of olives, oranges, and such-like fruit-trees, all this extent of country was sterile. On nearing Verona, it is true, there was more fertility, and vines festooned from tree to tree.

The travellers had been obliged, on leaving Trent, to take "bills of health," without which they would not have been allowed to enter Verona. Yet there was no danger of plague. The thing was done in obedience

to custom or to swindle travellers. The secretary does not allude to the plague that ravaged Trent after the breaking up of the Council, seventeen years before, and which was no doubt the origin of this precaution.

At the Duomo of Verona, Montaigne was struck by the irreverent behaviour of the men during grand mass. They chatted in the centre of the church, standing with their hats on, their backs turned towards the altar, and making no sign of attending to the service except at the elevation of the host. The Italy of the sixteenth century was like the Italy of to-day: devotion reigned supreme, but over the smallest possible province of human nature. Organs and fiddles accompanied the singing. Montaigne went to other churches; and, pagan that he was, complained of the absence of remarkable ornaments and beautiful women!

At the church of St. George, singularly enough, he noticed many traces of the former presence of the Germans at Verona! He tells us that there was an inscription stating that one of the offerings on the altar was made by some German gentlemen, who accompanied the Emperor Maximilian when he took the city from the Venetians; and that these noble-minded signors had not removed this testimony to former humiliation when their supremacy was restored.

At Verona there was at that time a monkish order, called the Jesuits of Saint Jerôme. They were very ignorant, and lived by distilling citron-flower-water, and such-like liqueurs, there and elsewhere. They were dressed in white, with little white caps and brown

cloaks: very fine young men. Their church was well fitted up; and so was their refectory, where supper was laid out when the party arrived. The monks perfumed their cloisters in honour of the visitors, whom they also took into a little cabinet full of phials and earthen pots, and sprinkled with scented waters. Montaigne was here shown the remnants of an amphitheatre, different from the famous Arena. The latter edifice was very nearly entire, says the secretary, and the Signoria of Verona was employing some of the fines it levied on criminals to restore it; but the funds were insufficient, and it then appeared doubtful whether the whole value of the city would pay for the work; which has, however, since been completed. The gentlemen of Verona used the place for tournaments, and other public pleasures; just as the Arenas of Arles, Nismes, and other places in the south of France, are at present used for bull-baiting, in imitation of the Spaniards.

All this journal is full of curious notes. But it is impossible to refer to them all. Montaigne visited the Jews of Verona, and conversed with them long upon their ceremonies. The whole country was covered with inscriptions; for it was the custom in those days never to mend even a gutter without inscribing the name of the Podesta by whose order, and the workman by whose hand, the task was executed. This was the offspring of true Republicanism, in which due respect was paid to the state and to the individual. How different from the horrible absorption of the productions of Genius and Labour into the reputation of a monarch! Like

the Germans, all Italian families, merchant or noble, had their arms.

Neither Montaigne nor the secretary suggests any reason for turning aside here from the road to Rome; but I have no doubt that the memory of La Boëtie's partiality for Venice influenced Montaigne. "He hungered exceedingly to see that city." The road led them through Vicenza, where the fair was being held. There was another monastery of Jesuits of St. Jerôme there, who dealt in perfumed waters. They whipped themselves, *they said*, every day.

Here we are told, "The old wines are failing, which grieves me very much, on account of his (Montaigne's) colic. These troubled new wines are not good for him. We regret those of Germany, although they are aromatic, some having a flavour of sage; which is not bad when one is accustomed."

"A level, broad, straight road, with a ditch on either side, and somewhat raised above a very fertile plain, the mountains being still visible in the distance," took the travellers to Padua. Padua was at least as large as Bordeaux; but the streets were long and ugly, and had few fine houses. There were many fencing, dancing, and riding-schools, where Montaigne counted more than a hundred French gentlemen. It seemed to him very unwise in his young countrymen who travelled there to consort together, and so, instead of acquiring knowledge of foreign customs and language, become more inveterate in their own. Students lived

at Padua for seven écus a-month for the master, and six for the servant, in the best boarding-houses.

Montaigne noticed also with pleasure, in the church of St. Antony, the portrait of Cardinal Bembo, which expressed the amenity of his manners, and even something of the elegance of his mind. In the vast hall of justice was the head of Livy, of ancient workmanship, representing a meagre, studious, and melancholy man, so excellently that it seemed to lack no quality but speech!

Leaving Padua, the travellers proceeded along a handsome raised road by the river-side. On all hands spread fertile fields of wheat, shaded with trees, regularly planted and festooned with vines. Beautiful country-houses bordered the road: among others, the villa of the Contarini family, over the door of which was an inscription recording that the then reigning King of France had lodged there on his way back from Poland. People were proud in those days, as in these, of such events.

CHAPTER XVI.

VENICE, FLORENCE, AND SIENNA.

At the "Chaffousine," a solitary hotel, the travellers embarked for Venice in a gondola, and arrived at last in that island city. Next day, Sunday, M. de Montaigne waited on M. de Ferrier, the French ambassador, who seems to have made a particular impression on his mind; for he adds to his secretary's MS. in his own hand, "This old man, who has passed seventy-five years, as he says, enjoys a healthy and lively old age. His ways and his discourses have I know not what that is scholastic, with little vivacity and point. His opinions bear evidently, in what concerns our affairs, towards the Calvinistic innovations." M. de Ferrier received Montaigne hospitably, took him to mass, despite his supposed Calvinism, and made him stop to dinner. Among other things he said, what seemed most strange to Montaigne, was, that he held communion with no person of the town, for the people were so suspicious by nature, that if one of their gentlemen had spoken twice to the French ambassador, he would have been mistrusted.

It is worth noticing that this M. de Ferrier afterwards made public profession of the Calvinistic religion, and entered the service of the King of Navarre. "M. de Montaigne," observes Duplessis Mornay, "used often to say to me, that we had gained a battle from them (the Catholics) by winning over this personage, honouring the virtue which they had despised." "Virtue," here probably stands for ability. At any rate this M. de Ferrier, returning from Italy at the age of seventy-three, delayed his recantation, which he had promised, in the hope of catching "an assignation of fourteen thousand crowns from the Court." But this not coming, he accepted Henry's seals and made public profession of the Reformed religion. Montaigne mentions in his Essays that an aged man had confessed to him, that, though a Protestant in heart, he had all his life professed another creed in order to enjoy wealth and power. This was, no doubt, M. de Ferrier.

Montaigne found Venice somewhat different from what he had expected,—even a little less admirable. He examined it thoroughly with the greatest diligence: hiring a gondola for his use night and day. Its police, its site, the Arsenal, the Piazza San Marco, and the throng of foreigners, seemed to him the most remarkable things. La Signora Veronica Franca, a noble Venetian lady, sent him one day, whilst he was at supper, a little volume of letters which she had composed. Montaigne gave the messenger two écus, says the secretary; perhaps a little annoyed at

this ostentatious liberality. The volume of letters, no doubt, went to join the hundred others of that class which his library contained.

Montaigne was disappointed in the beauty of the Venetian ladies—although he saw "the most noble of those who trafficked in their beauty." The word "noble" here is not a slip of the scribe: but a translation of the title granted to these mercenary angels by the Italian writers. The most wonderful thing to Montaigne was to see so many of them, perhaps a hundred and fifty, spending money in furniture and dress like princesses: without any other source of revenue but one. Many of the nobility entertained them at their cost, to the knowledge of every one. But in those days the courtezans were a brilliant and often not the least estimable part of society. Men of letters vied in celebrating their magnificence, and even their generosity. Ninon de l'Enclos was but a pale reflex of the celebrated Imperia, whose house was so brilliant that the Spanish ambassador, on entering it, repeated the coarse joke of Diogenes, and spat in the face of one of the servants, saying that there was no other spot where he could do so with propriety. Mingled with her lutes and her music were richly-bound books in Latin and Italian. When she died a public monument was raised in the church of St. Gregory, recording not only her beauty but her profession.

The secretary notes that food was as dear at Venice as at Paris: but still, that to live there was

cheap, there being no necessity for a crowd of valets, every one going alone; and no use for horses. Montaigne was not satisfied with this brief stay at Venice and its surrounding country, and intended to visit it once more. But he felt unable to go further without having a relish of this city of his dreams. He could not, he said, have remained quiet at Rome, or in any other place in Italy, until he had glanced at Venice. After a stay of eight days, the party left that city and returned to Padua by water, although Montaigne usually avoided a boat when he could use the saddle. At Padua, M. de Caselis left the party and took lodgings in a boarding-house, one of the best in the place. There was good company there; among others, the Sieur de Millau, son of M. de Salignac. It was the custom of most students and residents to have no valets, but to be served by the waiter of the house or by women. Every one had his own room, very clean; and supplied his own fire and candles. The board was excellent; and being cheap, accounted for the residence of a great number of strangers who were not students. It was not the custom to ride about the town, or to have many followers. In Germany, all men, even of the working classes, wore a sword by their side: but no one went armed in the territories of Venice. At Padua, Montaigne left in the hands of one François Bourges, a Frenchman, the works of Cardinal de Cusa, which he had bought at Venice, intending to take them in his way back.

Having visited the Baths of Aborno, where the sulphureous waters filled the air with vapour; and passed by San Pietro, where the water was purposely neglected by the Signoria, who cared not much for the visits of foreign gentry; and seen the villa of Signor Pic, where the gouty Cardinal d'Este was residing, partly for the sake of the water, but more on account of the neighbourhood of the Venetian ladies; the party arrived at Bataglia, near which were other baths which Montaigne visited.

All the natural and artificial wonders of the country are described: the roads, aqueducts, bridges, ruins, marshes which had been attempted to be drained, fields, and especially the vines trained on trees. The large grey cattle were so common, that those of the Archduke Ferdinand appeared no longer curious. As usual, the secretary notices the differences of cookery—the non-larding of meat as in France—the want of glass windows—the high-piled beds with dirty linen: single travellers, or humble ones, had none at all: the customs at ferries are also carefully noted.

On arriving at Ferrara, there was the usual fuss about passports and bills of health. Over the door of every room in the hotel, moreover, was written: "Ricordati della Boletta." As soon as a traveller arrived, his name, with the number of his servants, was sent to the magistrates, who decides whether he is to be received or not. They were "paternal," then, in those days, likewise: and yet we travellers continue to complain as if of a new evil!

The city is described to be large as Tours, situated in a plain, with many palaces, broad straight streets, and few people. Next day after arriving, MM. d'Estissac and de Montaigne went to "kiss the hands" of the Duke, Alfonso d'Este, so famous in the melancholy history of Tasso. The whole formalities of the visit are described. A messenger was first despatched to the Duke, to request permission to wait on him. He immediately sent a lord of his court to meet them and lead them to his cabinet, where he was with two or three persons. "We passed," says the journal, "through several closed chambers, where were many well-dressed gentlemen. We were ushered in. We found him standing near a table, waiting for his visitors. He put his hand to his cap when they entered; and uncovered his head during the whole time that M. de Montaigne spoke to him, which was pretty long. His first question was whether he (Montaigne) understood Italian; and being answered '*Yes,*' he said, very eloquently, that he saw with pleasure gentlemen of the French nation, for he was the servant and the obliged of the Very Christian King." They had some other conversation together and "they then withdrew, the lord Duke having never once covered his head."

The secretary, who is thus particular in recording this interview; and who mentions that the party went to see in a church the bust of Ariosto, "who died aged fifty-nine, on June 6, 1533"—which bust they found fuller in the face than the portraits prefixed

to the poems;—forgets utterly to note that his master, not unmindful of unfortunate genius, went also to visit Tasso in his prison. There has been a great discussion as to where the poet was confined in 1580. Vulgar tradition points out a dark, damp hole, in which the gigantic Tasso would scarcely have had space to turn. But the erudite have combated this statement, without, however, alleging any probable counter-statement. It is, therefore, only safe to say that Tasso, who was sent to the Hospital of St. Ann as a madman, in March 1579, was still there in November 1580, when Montaigne came to Ferrara. That was a strange madness which allowed him to revise his poems and compose philosophical dialogues! Montaigne, however, never doubting that his reason had given way, and making no allusion to his loves, his austerity, his persecution, in a well-known passage of the Essays, explains everything by the excess of genius. But our Essayist, admitted to Court, would naturally take the courtly view of the case. Alfonso d'Este outlived him; and he was not the man to meddle with the domestic concerns of a reigning sovereign. The secretary, in a manuscript not intended for publication, observes, that his master went to see the Bucentaur which the Duke had made, in imitation of that of Venice, for his new wife—"beautiful, and too young for him."

The journal mentions the porticoes of Padua, the churches, palaces, and private gardens, and notes that at the Jesuits' convent there was a rose-tree which

flowered once a-month all the year round. They gave one that happened to be in bloom to M. de Montaigne. They saw people walking on stilts, as in the Landes of Gascony, on the way to Bologna—a great and populous city, where they met the young Seigneur de Montluc, just arrived from France to study arms and horsemanship there. Montaigne was thus led to go to a famous Venetian fencing-master's school, and records with pride that his most proficient pupil was a young man of Bordeaux, named Binet. Another time he went to the play, where he was so much amused that he came away with a headache, "which went away in the night." The city was less peaceable than Ferrara; for there were old feuds between two parts of the population, and one side was espoused by the French residents, another by the Spaniards.

A German having reported that he had been robbed by the Banished Men, or brigands of the duchy of Spoleto, Montaigne, instead of now going straight on to Rome, turned aside to Florence. The secretary, in the name of his master, makes long lamentations of the extortionate treatment of the hotel-keepers of Loiano. Beyond was the first really difficult road they had met on their journey, which led them to Scarperia, where Montaigne was mightily amused by the eloquence of rival inn-keepers, or rather "touters." The custom in that country was to send to meet strangers seven or eight leagues on the road, to beg them to choose their hotel. The host himself sometimes came out on horseback; and well-dressed men watched at every

corner. They joined travellers, and entertained them as they went along with offers of all manner of services, some of which the secretary, more delicate than his master usually was, expresses in Italian. One offered a hare, as a gift to induce Montaigne to choose his house. They disputed also one with the other; but all this noise ceased at the gates of the town. Montaigne listened to what was said, but sent one of his people to examine every hotel before he would get off his horse. Yet it was impossible to avoid being cheated!

The party turned aside to visit the magnificent palace of the Pratellino, its galleries, gardens, and grottoes, of which a minute description is given, full of interesting details; and afterwards crossed the hills to Florence, which was then without a moat. Curiously enough, Montaigne's first visit was to the Duke's stables; he then examined a menagerie; then went to the church of San Lorenzo, and saw the French standards which Pierre Strozzi lost at the battle of Marciano, as well as "some excellent statues by Michael Angelo." M. de Montaigne seems to have been in an ill-humour that day; and it is set down that "he said he had never seen a country where there were so few pretty women as in Italy;" that he found the lodgings and the cooking much inferior to those of Germany and France; complained of the wooden shutters, that shut out light as well as cold; noted the hard beds, the want of linen, the bad wines, the absence of pewter, the dirtiness of the earthenware; and approved of nothing but the comparative cheap-

ness. Yet Florence was considered the dearest town in Italy. They lodged at the sign of the "Angel." On the whole, Florence did not please Montaigne. "He cannot tell," he says, "why it is called Beautiful above all others. It is not superior to Bologna, not much to Ferrara, and immeasurably inferior to Venice." Montaigne, as in all other places, in order to judge of the conveniences of life, visited the rooms that he saw to let, and examined the boarding-houses. They all seemed dirty, and dearer than at Paris, and even Venice. There were no schools worth anything of arms, horsemanship, or letters.

They visited a palace of the Grand Duke, where he was fond of working and imitating precious stones; for he was great in alchemy, as well as the mechanical arts and architecture. The Duomo, the palace of the Strozzi and the Gondis; the palace of the Duke, where Cosmo his father had caused the siege of Sienna, which Montluc defended, to be painted; and the Pitti palace, "where the Queen-Mother (Catherine de Medici) was born," next engaged the attention of the travellers.

Messrs. d'Estissac and de Montaigne were invited to dinner by the Grand Duke. In the place of honour sat his wife, the famous Bianca Capello; next to her the Duke; then the sister-in-law of the Duchess; then her brother. Montaigne knew the infamous story of Bianca and the Grand Duke, but his allusion is very slight. "This Duchess is beautiful in the Italian style, with an agreeable and imperious face, a

powerful bust, and well-developed bosom." Montaigne thought it easy to understand how she had cajoled this prince, and kept him devoted to her so long. "The Duke himself is a short, dark man, about my height, big in limb, with a countenance full of courtesy. Whenever he passes amidst the crowd of his gentlemen it is always with uncovered head. He seems healthy, and is above forty. On the opposite side of the table was the Cardinal de Medici, and a young man about eighteen, one of the Duke's brothers. When the Duke or his wife drinks, a valet brings to them in a basin a glassful of wine uncovered, and a decanter of water: they empty out as much wine as they please into the basin, and fill the rest with water. The Duke put in a good deal of water, *Bianca hardly any.*"

Montaigne visited the country-house of the Castello, where, as in many other places, he saw extraordinary fountains, like those that were afterwards constructed at Versailles: he describes them most minutely, as he does all curious contrivances he noticed. Nothing seems to interest him more than these mechanical triumphs.

The party left Florence on Nov. 24, and went in one day to Sienna, which Montaigne examined carefully because of the fine defence of his friend Montluc. He found that the Duke of Florence treated very courteously the nobles who had formerly favoured the French, and had Silvio Piccolomini always about his person. He also allowed still to subsist the ancient "marks and devices" of the city, which con-

stantly spoke of liberty; but the tombs and epitaphs of the French had been removed to some obscure place, under pretence of some reparation. At Monte-Alcino the same thing was observed: there, too, the French tombs had disappeared. But the people "kept the memory of the French in so great veneration, that any allusion to them brought tears into their eyes! War even seemed to them more agreeable with some form of liberty, than the peace they enjoyed under tyranny." No doubt it was the thought of liberty, and not of the French, that brought tears to the eyes of the Siennese: for the French were only accidentally engaged on the right side, and their ferocity and barbarism had even then done more harm to Italy than the gallantry of a few noble knights and adventurers could compensate for. From the time of Montaigne downwards, this strange people have yearned for the affection, the esteem, and the admiration of other nations—with the passion of lovers, and all the egotism of love—never sacrificing their appetites or desires to earn the thing they so ardently seek—loading the people they protect and die for with gay contumely and amiable insult—talking of heroism and sympathy, and making out a debtor-and-creditor account, in which all their material services are set down on one hand, and none of the moral humiliations they impose on their friends on the other;—and from that time to this, too, they have wandered, self-satisfied, smirking, impertinently condescending, over the countries they have cursed with their friendship, gathering

testimonials of affection from the venal mouths of ciceroni!

After passing La Paglia the travellers crossed a bridge built by Gregory the Thirteenth, the then reigning pope, and entered upon the States of the Church. The beauty of Montefiascone so struck Montaigne that he would have stopped, had not the baggage-mule been far ahead. The manners of the Pontifical States pleased him altogether—I suspect he had a secret dislike for the Medicean form of government. He much approved of their custom of dining and supping late; for in good houses nobody dined before two o'clock, or supped before nine. Where they found comedians did not begin the performances until six o'clock, at the lighting of the torches, which lasted two or three hours, and then made way for supper. Montaigne said this was a good country for idle people: everybody—enlightened, no doubt, by experience—got up late.

CHAPTER XVII.

MONTAIGNE'S RESIDENCE AT ROME.

THE party started next day, three hours before light; "so great was Montaigne's desire to see the walls of Rome." The nature and source of his enthusiasm is not described, but we may suppose that the country of Seneca had more of his sympathy than the country of the Papacy. The secretary carefully avoids all allusion to opinions or doctrines, and confines himself to recording the physical sensations of his master, and the material objects that struck him. Montaigne found the morning air as disagreeable as the evening air, and was ill until daylight. The city of Rome was visible once fifteen miles off, but disappeared again for a long time. There were a few villages and hotels on the road. Here and there were some pieces of road that seemed of ancient workmanship; and near the city fragments of building, evidently very ancient, and some monuments which the popes had caused to be restored for the honour of antiquity. Most of the ruins were of small bricks, much smaller

than those found in the old antiquities and ruins in France and elsewhere. Rome did not appear very striking from this approach. Far on the left of the road rose the Apennines, but the aspect of the country was unpleasant, covered with eminences, full of deep crevices, and "quite unfit for regular military movements." This observation, in the spirit of a soldier, is amusing. Montaigne had already noticed that the fort of Monte-Alcino was inconveniently commanded by a near hill. The territory in the neighbourhood of Rome was naked, without trees, in great part sterile, all the country open, and for more than ten miles around all alike, and very little furnished with houses. This contrast with the populous neighbourhood of Florence sounds still more strange when related by a writer of the sixteenth century, who has every reason not to allude to the blighting influence of the Church.

At the gates of Rome the travellers were delayed some time, on account of a plague reported at Genoa. This difficulty over, they went to lodge at the sign of the "Bear;" but on the 2d of December they took private lodgings in the house of a Spaniard, opposite Santa Lucia della Tinta. The house possibly still remains, and I recommend it to the attention of ciceroni. The travellers had three handsome bed-rooms, with a sitting-room, pantry, stable, and kitchen, for twenty écus a month, firing and cook included; and by exception, linen in the French style. At Rome, lodgings were commonly a little better furnished than at Paris, and were often lined with gilded leather. They

were shown one at the "Golden Vase," not far off, at the same price; but Montaigne did not like this magnificence, and objected also that the rooms led one into the other, and had no private entrances.

Montaigne noticed with displeasure the great number of Frenchmen at Rome; he scarcely met any one in the streets who did not salute him in his own language. But there was great novelty to him in the sight of so grand a court, so crowded with prelates and churchmen; and the place seemed more peopled with wealthy men, with carriages and horses, than any other he had ever seen. The appearance of the streets in many particulars, and especially the multitude that filled them, reminded Montaigne of Paris, that city of his predilections.

The city of Rome, says the secretary, generally using the third person, but writing under dictation, is situated on both sides of the Tiber. The steep quarter, which was the seat of the ancient city, and through which Montaigne made innumerable excursions every day, was cut up by some churches and a few houses and gardens of cardinals. The traveller judged, by very clear appearances, that the form and slope of the mountains were different from what they were in ancient times, and believed that in many places the ground was raised over the roofs of entire houses. On all sides the rain, and the deep ruts made by coaches, laid bare the summits of ancient walls. With reference to the extent of Rome, M. de Montaigne said, "that the space which the walls embraced, at that

time two-thirds empty, comprehending old and new Rome, might equal an enclosure that should be made round all Paris, including all the faubourgs. But that if the number and density of the houses were to be considered, he thought that Rome would fall short of Paris by a third. In multitude and splendour of public places, and beauty of streets and houses, Rome surpassed Paris by much."

At first sight, Montaigne judged the government of the city to be inferior to that of Venice. His list of grievances is curious enough. First, the houses were insecure against theft, and people who arrived with a large sum were obliged to deposit it at a banker's; second, to walk out at night was not safe; third, a General of the Cordeliers had just been removed and imprisoned for preaching in a very vague manner, in presence of the Pope and his cardinals, against the idleness and pomp of the prelates of the Church; fourth, that his trunk had been minutely searched at the Customs, whereas in other Italian cities this was a mere formality; fifth, that all books found in his baggage were taken away to be examined, which was done so slowly that a man in a hurry might consider them lost; and that, moreover, they were so exclusive, that a Prayer-book of Paris, not of Rome, seemed suspicious, as did some German books written against heresy, because the errors combated were mentioned in them. Montaigne notes that in all Germany he found no book in his possession forbidden.

References to the traveller's disease begin now to be

frequent; and we find him at last, despite his theories, conquered by pain and consenting to put himself in the hands of a doctor and take medicine—cassia and turpentine! When he continued his onslaught on the healing art, he should have had the ingenuousness to confess this weakness; but the mind gets accustomed to attack, and often continues the forms of hostility after a compromise has been agreed upon.

On Christmas-day the party went to hear the Pope's mass at St. Peter's, where Montaigne had a convenient place assigned him. His Holiness administered the sacrament, with due precaution against being poisoned in the wine. Beside him sat the Cardinals Farnese, Medici, Caraffa, and Gonzaga, with other prelates. They all sat with their heads covered during the ceremony, and chatted and talked, which seemed "new" to Montaigne. "These ceremonies," he adds, "appear more magnificent than devout." By the way, he noticed no particularity in the beauty of the women, worthy of that pre-excellence which reputation gives to this city above all others in the world; and moreover, that, as at Paris, the most remarkable beauty is found among those who offer it for sale.

"On the 29th of December, M. d'Abein, at that time ambassador, a studious gentleman, who had long been a friend of M. de Montaigne, was of opinion that he should go and kiss the Pope's foot. M. d'Estissac and he got into the carriage of the said ambassador, who went in to see the Pope, and had them called in by his Cameriere. They found the Pope, and with him

the ambassador, all alone, as is the fashion. Near him is a little bell, which he rings when he wants any one to come. The ambassador sits on his left, uncovered; for the Pope never takes off his cap to any one, and no ambassador remains covered in his presence. M. d'Estissac entered first, and after him M. de Montaigne; and after them M. de Mattecoulon and M. du Hautoi. Having taken a step or two in the chamber, at the corner of which the said Pope is sitting, those who enter, whoever they may be, put one knee to the ground, and wait until the Pope gives them his blessing, which he does. After that they rise and approach about half-way across; but most do not walk straight towards him, but move a little along the wall at first, and then advance in a direct line. At mid-chamber they kneel a second time, and receive a second blessing. This done, they draw near him until they reach a large shaggy carpet spread at his feet, seven or eight feet in front of him. On the edge of this carpet the gentlemen knelt on both knees. Then the ambassador who presented them—[can we repress a smile as we follow the Essayist through all these evolutions?]—put one knee to the ground, and lifted the Pope's gown off his right foot, which had on a red slipper marked with a white cross. Those who were on their knees worked their way in that position towards his foot, and stooped down to kiss it. M. de Montaigne said that he raised his foot a little for him. They made way one for the other to kiss, turning on one side, but still kneeling. The ambassador, this being done,

covered up the Pope's foot, and rising up, said what he thought proper to recommend M. d'Estissac and M. de Montaigne. The Pope, with a courteous countenance, admonished M. d'Estissac to study and virtue; and exhorted M. de Montaigne to continue in the devotion which he had always borne to the Church and to the service of his very Christian majesty; and added, that he would serve them both as much as he could. These be Italian phrases. They did not speak, but having received another blessing before rising, which is to signify dismissal, returned by the way they had come with similar manœuvres.

"The Pope (Gregory XIII.) is an Italian, with a Bolognese accent, the worst of Italy; and, moreover, by nature he speaks with difficulty. He is a fine old man, of middling stature; upright, with a countenance full of majesty, and a long white beard, more than eighty years of age, extremely healthy, of a gentle nature, little caring for the affairs of the world, but a great builder, (for which Rome will remember him with honour,) and charitable even to extravagance. He is indolent in private affairs, loving to throw them on the shoulders of others. But he gives as many audiences as are asked. His answers are brief and resolute, and it is loss of time to endeavour to return to the charge with new arguments. When he thinks a thing just he believes himself; and even for his son, whom he loves furiously, he will not depart from this justice. He advances his relatives, but without prejudice to the laws of the Church; and, in truth, in life and manners is

nothing very extraordinary one way or the other, though rather inclining to the good." This character, which shows much discrimination, and is highly favourable in an age when a cardinal was refused the Papacy because of his morality, was first dictated by Montaigne; but afterwards improved, as the manuscript shows, by his own hand.

Then follows in the journal an elaborate account of a dinner given to Montaigne by the Cardinal de Sens, and the ceremonies observed thereat. All little circumstances that showed special respect for the traveller are carefully noted. On the 3d of January, 1581, the Pope, having on a red hat, a white dress, with a cape of red velvet, and mounting a white nag, with red velvet trappings and gold trimmings, passed in great pomp before his window. On the 11th, in the morning, as Montaigne was riding out of the town, on his way to the banker's, he met, coming from prison, Catena, a famous captain of brigands, whom all Italy had feared, and of whom were related enormous murders, especially of the Capuchins, whom he forced to deny God under promise of safety, and then massacred them without any reason of utility or vengeance. The traveller stopped to witness this spectacle. In addition to the forms of France, the Romans carried before the criminal a great crucifix, covered with a black veil. Around, too, on foot, were a number of masked men, said to be great people of the city, who devoted themselves to this service of accompanying condemned wretches to the

scaffold. Two of them sat by him in the cart, and continually held before his face and presented to him a picture with the image of our Saviour. This prevented his face from being seen. At the gallows — a beam supported by two uprights — this picture was still held before him until he was flung off. Catena — a dark man about thirty years of age — died in an ordinary manner, without movement, and without speaking. When he was hanged they cut him in four quarters. "At Rome they rarely inflict on men more than simple death, and reserve their roughness until afterwards." Montaigne remarked what he had elsewhere observed (in the Essays), how the people are affected by rough treatment of dead bodies; for the crowd, which felt nothing at the hanging, groaned whenever the hatchet descended on the lifeless corpse. As soon as the criminal was dead, one or more Jesuits, or others, got up on some scaffolding or barrel and preached. Next day, however, Montaigne's secretary saw a sight which must have somewhat modified the opinion of his master on the absence of cruelty from Roman executions:—Two brothers, who had killed the governor of the city in the house of the Pope's son, were torn with red-hot pincers, had their hands cut off, were otherwise tortured, then beaten with clubs, and, finally, had their throats cut.

Montaigne makes a singular remark, that there were few paintings in the churches, and those very recent. Some old ones had none at all. Yet where could paintings have been found towards the end

of the sixteenth century, if not in the churches of Rome?

After having paid his visits of ceremony and business, Montaigne began "to amuse himself by studying Rome." At first he had taken a French guide; but this man, from some fantastical humour, gave up the job, and so the traveller was piqued, and determined to get through himself. For this purpose he studied maps, and had books read out to him in the evening. The next morning he went and applied what he had learned, so that in a few days he says "he could easily have guided his guide."

"He said," writes his secretary, "that we could now see nothing of Rome save the sky under which it had been built, and the plan of its site; that the knowledge he had of it was an abstract and contemplative science, of which nothing fell under the senses; that those who said that at least the ruins of Rome could be seen said too much, for the ruins of such a fearful fabric would impress the beholder with more honour and awe; that we could only see its tomb. The world, inimical to its long domination, had first broken and shattered all the pieces of this admirable body; and then, as even dead, overthrown and disfigured, it created terror, had buried the ruin itself. These little shows of its fragments that appear above the bier had been preserved by fortune as witnesses of that infinite greatness which so many ages, so many conflagrations, the conspiracy of the whole world against it, repeated over and over again, had not been

able entirely to suppress. But it was probable these disfigured members that remained were the least worthy, and that the fury of the enemies of that immortal glory had incited them first to destroy what was finest. The buildings of that bastard Rome, which are now being added to those ancient piles, though fit to ravish with admiration the present age, reminded him of the nests which sparrows and blackbirds hang in France to the vaults and walls of the churches which the Huguenots have just demolished. He even feared, considering the little space which the tomb occupied, that it was not all recognised, and that a great part of the tomb was already buried." In this strain did Montaigne speculate on those ruins, "deep into the antipodes," as he expresses it in the Essays; and going on, he endeavours to reconstruct for himself a picture of that wonderful city when in its might and its majesty. His observations may be read with fruit by moralists and antiquaries even now.

On January 30th, Montaigne went to see "the most ancient religious ceremony known among men" —the Circumcision of the Jews. He had already visited the Synagogue, and noticed that they sung in a disorderly manner, like the Calvinists, children and all, and paid as little attention to their prayers as the Catholics, talking business all the time. Montaigne describes the ceremony he went to see most minutely. Nothing interested him more than this strange diversity of customs.

Great liberty was granted that year for the amuse-

ments at the Carême-prenant. Children, and Jews, and naked old men, raced in the streets on foot; and children only, upon horses, asses, and buffaloes. Montaigne had a scaffolding built, at the expense of three écus, to see the sight, of which he did not think much. The only thing that interested him was the sight of the ladies, who were not masked as at Paris. As for perfect and rare beauty he saw none, except in three or four cases; but commonly the women were more agreeable, and fewer were downright ugly, than in France. The Roman head-dress was far better than the French; so was the costume below the waist. But Montaigne was so accustomed to the tight waists of his own country that the easiness of these ladies made him think them all in an interesting situation. "Their countenance, however," he says, "has more majesty, gentleness, and meekness. There is no comparison in the richness of their dress and ours,—they are all over pearls and precious stones. Wherever they appear in public—whether in carriages, at festivals, or in theatres—they are apart from the men. Nevertheless, they have tolerably free interlaced dances, during which opportunities of whispering and hand-touching occur. The men are very simply dressed on all occasions, in black and serge of Florence; and because they are a little darker than we, I know not how it happens, but they do not appear like dukes, counts, and marquises, which they are, but seem rather common. Yet they are courteous and extremely amiable, whatever may be said by the vulgar among

the French, who will not call amiable those who do not easily endure their licentiousness and insolence. We endeavour, in all ways, to do all we can to make ourselves decried. Nevertheless, these Romans have an ancient affection and reverence for France, which makes such amongst us much respected and welcomed who in the least deserve to be so, and who just restrain themselves sufficiently not to be offensive." Is this outspoken language on national characteristics the reason why the "Travels" have never been popular in France? I once asked a bookseller if they were to be reprinted, and he answered with some indignation, using, I believe, the words of the "Manuel du Libraire,"—"No, sir; they are of very little value."

After some descriptions of banqueting and festivals, the journal kept by the secretary here comes abruptly to a close, and the remainder is entirely written by Montaigne himself. "Having dismissed," he says, "the servant who conducted this fine piece of work, and seeing it is far advanced, however inconvenient it may be, I must continue it myself."

He begins by an elaborate description of the exorcism of a devil, who had taken possession of the body of a Notary. The scene occurred in a little chapel, and was elaborately ridiculous; but the narrator manages to preserve his gravity. He was told, that the day before a devil had been made to jump out of a woman's mouth, bringing with him nails, pins, and leaving behind a tuft of his hair! A new spirit entered into her next day; "but," said the priest to

Montaigne, " this second kind (for he knew the names of them, their divisions, and most particular distinctions) was easy to expel." This was all he saw. The Notary answered when he was adjured, and punched with the fist, and spit upon, and ground his teeth and twisted his mouth, and when the Corpus Domini was offered him muttered *Si fata volent,* for he knew a little Latin.

The common people seemed to Montaigne less devout than in the good cities of France, but more ceremonious, being extremely so. " I write here in all liberty of conscience," he says, " and shall give examples. *A certain person,* being alone with a lady of free manners, heard the clock strike twenty-four, and the Ave Maria sound; she instantly sprang away from him, and fell on her knees to pray. Another time he was similarly accompanied, when suddenly an old duenna burst open the door, rushed in, and with anger and fury snatched off the girl's neck a little image of the Virgin, which she had forgotten to remove. The young one appeared very contrite at her omission." We see by this that Montaigne's experience at Rome ranged very widely.

On March 1, Montaigne saw the ambassador of the Muscovite, clothed with a scarlet mantle and a dress of cloth of gold, with a hat shaped like a night-cap, of cloth of gold furred, and beneath a skull-cap of silver cloth. This was the second Muscovite ambassador sent to the Pope, another having come in the time of Paul the Third. The object of the negociation seems now singular,—it was to move the Pope to interfere in

the war which the King of Poland was waging against his master. For it was his (the Muscovite's) place to withstand the shock of the Turk; and if his neighbour weakened him he would be incapable of the other war, which would be a great window opened for the Turk to get at us by. The Czar (Ivan the Terrible) offered, as a further inducement to his Holiness to protect him against Poland, to efface certain differences of religion that existed between him and the Romish Church,—in which he has since been imitated by Peter the Great. How different were the relations of Turkey with Europe in those days! Montaigne, in his Essays, recommends young French gentlemen to go and join the armies of the Sultan, and study discipline and the art of war.

The Muscovite ambassador was well received at Rome. At first he refused to kiss the Pope's foot, and only gave in when it was proved to him that even the Emperor was subject to this ceremony; for the example of kings did not suffice for him. He could speak no language but his own, and had come without an interpreter. He had only three or four men in his suite, and said he had passed with great danger disguised through Poland. "His nation," says Montaigne, "is so ignorant of the affairs of this part of the world, that he brought to Venice letters from his master addressed to 'the great Governor of the Signoria.' Being asked what was meant by this, he replied that he thought that Venice was part of the Pope's territories, and that a governor was sent there as to Bologna and

elsewhere. God knows how those magnificent gentlemen (of Venice) received this ignorance. He brought with him rich and rare furs as presents." This barbarian was taken to see a Passover procession, at which he was disappointed, saying that when there was a gathering in his country there were always twenty-five or thirty thousand horses. He made fun of the whole affair, according to the person appointed as his interpreter, who told this to Montaigne.

The Essayist visited the library of the Vatican, and describes its curious contents. Few travellers have been more industrious in seeing everything, or more judicious in mentioning the most remarkable things. Among the curiosities exhibited was the original of the book composed by Henry the Eighth of England against Luther, sent to Leo the Tenth. Montaigne read the two prefaces, and praises the Latin. Apropos of this manuscript, he says it was shown him without difficulty, whereas the French ambassador, his friend, could never get a sight of it, although he much wished to do so. "All things are thus," observes he, "easy to some — inaccessible to others. Opportunity has its privileges, and offers often to the people what it refuses to kings. Courage often hinders itself, as do greatness and power." Montaigne examined a manuscript of Virgil, which confirmed him in the opinion that four lines, then usually printed at the beginning, were spurious. He was deeply interested in these learned points.

Since his arrival at Rome he had made acquaintance with an old Patriarch of Antioch, an Arab, strong in

Oriental languages, who now made him a present of a mixture for the gravel, and wrote a receipt for its use; which Montaigne transcribes in his journal, lest he should forget it. Here we find him accepting a mysterious drug, and determining to use it, after having scoffed at the most reasonable medical assistance.

Montaigne's old master, Muretus, was at that time living in Rome; and we have the record of a discussion at M. d'Abein's table between these two and other learned men on Amyot's translation of Plutarch. Montaigne warmly undertook the defence of Amyot, and maintained that when he had missed the true sense of Plutarch he had substituted another probable one, quite consistent with the context. But examples were brought forward which convinced him that he was too partial.

In the porch of St. Peter's were shown flags said to have been taken by the King of France from the Huguenots; "but it is not specified," notes Montaigne, "where or when." In a chapel he saw a wretched picture of the battle of Moncontour. "There are also, in two places, representations in which the wound of M. l'Amiral de Chatillon is painted, and his death, very authentically." This enigmatic reference to the St. Bartholomew, the only one in all Montaigne's writings, is most characteristic.

On March 15th the young Montluc called, according to appointment, at Montaigne's lodgings, and they started together for Ostia. On the way they came to a

place where it was necessary to cross the Tiber in a ferry; but there was no boat for horses, and they were about to return, when the Sieurs du Bellai, Baron de Chasai, and Marivau, rode down to the opposite bank. An exchange of animals was effected, and the journey was continued. Montaigne's observations on this trip are curious, but it would be too long to repeat them.

"Rome," says the traveller, "is a city of courtiers and nobility; everybody takes his share of ecclesiastical idleness. There are no trading streets, or less than in a small town; there are only palaces and gardens. There is no street like the Rue de la Harpe, or de St. Denis. I always fancy I am in the Rue de Seine or on the Quai des Augustins at Paris. The city scarcely changes its appearance on work-days and festival days. All through Lent there are Stations; they are not less followed on work-days than on others. At that time nothing is to be seen but carriages, prelates, and ladies."

Montaigne went to the hot baths to be scrubbed, and rather makes a merit that he did not take a "lady-friend" with him, as was the custom of the city. On the 17th of March there were roses and artichokes to be had in Rome; but the traveller did not suffer from the heat. He went about every day visiting churches and observing curious customs, and has succeeded in producing the best picture I know of Rome under Gregory the Thirteenth. Yet how rarely, if ever, is his testimony referred to by historians!

It is worth while quoting his opinion of the Jesuits. "How marvellous is the place their College holds in Christendom! I think there never was a brotherhood or body among us which held such a rank, nor which has produced such fruits as these will do if their designs continue. They now occupy nearly all Christendom. They are a nursery of great men, of all sorts of greatness. They form the greatest menace for the heretics of our time!"

The Romans were fond of strolling through the streets without any particular object, except to see the ladies at the windows; and especially the Hetairæ, who showed themselves with such a treacherous art that they deceived the beholder, and made him fancy them more beautiful than they were. "I have often," says Montaigne, confidentially, "got off my horse at once and obtained admission, and have been surprised to find how much I have been deceived. They know how to turn their most agreeable part to you; sometimes the top of the face, or the lower part, or the side—so that at the windows not one seems ugly. Every one is there taking off his hat, making low bows, and receiving glances. The last favoured lover acquires the right to make this public demonstration! Now and then a lady of quality shows herself, but it is easy to distinguish her. On horseback, little men like me see best."

On Holy Thursday the Pope, in his pontifical robes, appeared in the portico of St. Peter, whilst a Canon read a bull "excommunicating an infinity of people,

among others the Huguenots (by that name), and all princes who detained any of the lands of the Church; at which article the Cardinals de Medici and Caraffa, who sat near the Pope, held their sides with laughing!" After this the Pope threw down a lighted taper among the crowd, which fought with fists and sticks for pieces of it.

The Veronica was shown during these days—"a face of a sombre and obscure colour, in a square like a great mirror." A priest with red gloves held it up from a pulpit, assisted by others. The people prostrated themselves on the earth, mostly with tears in their eyes, and with cries of commiseration. A woman, said to be possessed, stormed at seeing this face, cried, shrieked, and wrung her arms. The priests moved round the pulpit, turning the Veronica now here now there, and wherever it was turned the people shouted. At the same time was exhibited the "lance-head" in a crystal bottle. Many times a day this ceremony was performed, with so great an assemblage of people, that the crowd stretched far out of the gates, wherever the most distant glimpse of the pulpit could be gained. "It is fine," says Montaigne, in a passage too characteristic and picturesque to be passed over, "to see the fine ardour of so vast an assemblage for religion on such days. They have a hundred brotherhoods and more; and there is scarcely a man of quality but is attached to some one of these. . . . They traverse the streets in troops, dressed in linen garments; each company has its fashion—some white, others red, blue, green, or black;

and generally their faces are veiled. The most noble and magnificent thing I have seen, here or elsewhere, is the incredible number of people spread through the city this day engaged in devotion, especially these brotherhoods. For, besides a great number of others whom we had seen in the daytime, and who had come to St. Peter's, when night began the whole city seemed on fire—the companies marching in order towards the church, each bearing a light, generally a taper of white wax. I think there passed before me twelve thousand torches at least; for from eight o'clock in the evening to midnight the street was always full of this pomp, conducted with order so good and so measured, that although the processions came from different directions there was no breach or interruption. Each body was accompanied with music, and they sang as they moved. In the midst of the ranks was a file of Penitents, who scourged themselves with cords; of whom there were five hundred at least, their backs all skinned and bleeding in a piteous fashion. This is an enigma I do not yet quite understand: the penitents are hurt and cruelly wounded, and torment and beat themselves incessantly; but if we look at their countenances, the assurance of their step, the firmness of their words (for I heard several speak), and their countenances (for many were uncovered in the street), it does not seem even that they are doing a painful or serious action: yet there were some young ones of twelve or thirteen years of age. Close by me

there was quite a youth, with an agreeable countenance: a young woman pitied him to see him thus hurt, he turned towards us, and said laughing: '*Basta! disse che fo questo per li lui peccati, non per li miei.*' Not only do they show no distress, or seem to be constrained, but they act with joy, or at least, with such indifference that you see them talking of other things, laughing, hallooing, running, leaping, as in a great crowd when the ranks are broken. Among them are men with wine, who give them to drink, or wet the ends of their whips, or blow the wine on their wounds. From their shoes and stockings they seem to be poor people, who sell themselves for this work; at least most of them. They told me their shoulders were greased: but I saw the wounds so raw and the sufferings so prolonged, that no medicament could have taken away feeling. Moreover, why do people praise them, if all this is mere sham?"

The sly *naïveté* of this question seems to suggest that, despite the evidence of his senses, Montaigne thought the whole scene a gross comedy; but the effects of enthusiasm, and even artificial excitement, in rendering the body insensible to pain, had not then been studied. The writer of these pages has seen in the East, hundreds of men and boys submit to the trampling of a heavy horse, heavily mounted, on a similar occasion.

On Holy Thursday, although the ladies had more liberty than usual, there was a cessation of all oglings and amorous intercourse. Montaigne's journal, though

desultory, is fuller of fact and observation than most descriptions of the Holy Week at Rome. He saw the heads of St. Paul and St. Peter, with flesh on, and beards, and complexion, "just as if they were living;" and describes minutely their appearance and the formalities with which they were shown: adding, however, that they were placed rather high, and seen through iron bars. "They light around, outside, many tapers; but it is difficult to discover very clearly all particularities. I saw them two or three times. The polish of their faces has some resemblance to our masks!"

By this time Maldonat, the Jesuit whom Montaigne had met at Espernay, had come to Rome: in conversation they both agreed that the poor people were, without comparison, more devout in France than there; but the rich and courtiers a little less. Maldonat maintained against some Spaniards that "there were more men truly religious in Paris than in the whole of Spain."

"I know not," says Montaigne, "how others find the air of Rome: *I* find it very pleasant and healthy. The Seigneur de Vialart said he had lost there his liability to the megrims; which agrees with the opinion of the people, who maintain the climate to be bad for the feet and good for the head. Nothing is so opposed to my health as ennui and idleness: here I have always some occupation, if not so pleasant as I could desire, at least sufficient to occupy me: as visiting the antiquities, and the vineyards, which are

gardens and pleasure-places of singular beauty, in which art has made rough steep places far superior in grace to our level pieces of ground. Here you may go and wander alone, or sleep, or fulfil assignations. . . . Sometimes I went to hear sermons, which are always going on, or disputes of theology; and sometimes to the Hetairæ, who make you pay a high price for their conversation: which was all I wanted, as my object was to listen to their chat and participate in their subtleties. All these amusements occupy me sufficiently. Of melancholy, which is my death, and of ennui, I have no opportunity, neither within the house nor without. Rome is therefore a pleasant residence, and I can infer, if I had known it more intimately, how it would have pleased me: for, in truth, although I have employed art and nature, I have seen only its public face, and what it offers to the meanest stranger."

Montaigne was very anxious to obtain the citizenship of Rome; and bestirred himself for the purpose among his Italian friends, avoiding to use the influence of the embassy. The authority of the Pope was brought into play, by means of Filippo Masotti, his major-domo, who had conceived a singular affection for the Essayist, and took great pains to have his wishes accomplished. The letters of citizenship, full of complimentary phrases—the same which had just been applied to the Duke of Sero, the Pope's son—were delivered finally on the 5th of April, and are given at length in the Essays.

After a visit to Tivoli, Montaigne prepared for his

departure from Rome. It is necessary here to repeat, that on his arrival all his books had been seized; among others, a copy of the Essays. Some time after, his work was returned to him with the observations of the monkish doctors. The Maestro of the Sacred Palace had only been able to judge of it by the report of a certain French brother, as he did not understand the language. He had an interview with Montaigne, and showed himself very lenient, contenting himself so well with the excuses put forward in answer to each article of the animadversions written by the said French monk, that he left it to the Essayist's conscience "to re-write what he should see to be in bad taste!" . . . "I begged him," says Montaigne, "on the other hand, to follow the opinion of him who had made the judgment, acknowledging some things—as that I had used the word Fortune, that I had mentioned heretic poets, that I had excused Julian the Apostate, that I had said that he who prayed should be exempt from vicious inclinations at the time; *item*, that I considered anything beyond simple death, cruelty; *item*, that a child should be brought up to do everything; and other such things, stating that such were my opinions, and that I had expressed them without knowing them to be errors. In other cases I denied that the corrector had understood my conception."

What a strange farrago must the criticism of this stupid monk have been! The Maestro, who was an able man, took the part of Montaigne, and did his best to impress on him that he did not much agree with the

proposed alterations, by pleading very ingeniously for him in his presence against another Italian who took the opposite view. The really dangerous parts of the Essays escaped them altogether. It is curious to remark that that dutiful and exemplary daughter of the Church, Catherine de Medici, often uses the proscribed word "Fortune," or Chance, in her letters.

The Romans seized a French version of a Catholic book because the translator was a heretic; but, on the whole, they seem to have been very lenient with Montaigne. When he went to take leave of the Maestro and his companion, they begged him to pay no attention to the censure of his book, in which censure some other Frenchmen had warned them there were many absurdities; and assured him that they honoured his intentions, and his affection towards the Church; also his talent; and had so high an opinion of his frankness and conscientiousness, that they left it to him to take out of his book, when he wished to reprint it, whatever he thought too free-spoken, and, among other things, the word Chance! "They seemed very satisfied with me," says Montaigne; "and, in order to excuse themselves for having thus minutely examined my book and condemned some parts of it, alleged many books of our time, by Cardinals, and others of good reputation, which were censured for such imperfections, which touched in no wise the reputation of the author or the book. They begged me to help the Church by my eloquence (such were their words of courtesy), and

to remain in this peaceable city, free from trouble, with them. They are persons of great authority, and Cardinalable."

With such golden opinions did this great Free-thinker depart from Rome; and proceed in a devout spirit to the miraculous shrine of Loretto.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MONTAIGNE'S PILGRIMAGE TO LORETTO.

MONTAIGNE left Rome in the afternoon, and was accompanied as far as Ponte-Mole by Messieurs de Marmoutiés, de la Trémouille, du Bellay, and other gentlemen. Nothing worthy of remark occurred as far as Spoleto, where the party had to show their bills of health; not for fear of the plague, which was then nowhere reported, but of Petrino, a citizen of that place, the most noble bandit of Italy, of whom the most famous exploits were related, and by whom that and all neighbouring cities feared to be surprised.

"This country," says Montaigne, "is strewed with many taverns; and where there are no houses they make green arbours of branches, and lay out on tables under them hard eggs, cheese, and wine." He was delighted with the beauty of the country, the broad valleys and cultivated hills—olive-grown to the summit. All his comparisons are derived from his own district, and may reveal the existence of un-

acknowledged nostalgia. Foligno reminded him of Sainte-Foi.

Here and there under the road-side trees, as the travellers advanced, they beheld monks stationed, giving holy-water in exchange for alms; and little children with bewildering heads of hair crowded round, holding up chaplets, and promising prayers for money.

Leaving the plain, Montaigne began to enter the mountains, and crossed a series of level valleys and lofty table-lands. "But early in the morning," he says, "we had, for some time, a brief view of a thousand different hills, clothed everywhere with the fine shadows of all sorts of fruit-trees, and the finest wheat possible, often growing on such steep and precipitous places that it seemed a miracle how horses could have ever reached there. Most beautiful valleys,—infinite number of streams,—throngs of houses and villages everywhere. I am reminded of the avenues of Florence, save that here there are no palaces or mansions of mark; and there the ground is dry and sterile, for the most part,—whilst here, not an inch on the hills is useless. It is true that spring time had now come. Often, far above our heads, we saw a fine village; then beneath our feet, as if at the antipodes, another—each with various and diverse commodities. Nor is the lustre of the scene spoiled by the uprising amidst these so fertile hills of the frowning and inaccessible Apennines, rolling forth many torrents, which, having spent their first fury, become very sweet and very pleasant streams in the valleys. Amidst the eminences, now aloft, now

below, many rich plains open, which sometimes bend away out of sight. It seems to me, that no painting could represent so rich a landscape."

After passing La Muccia, Montaigne showed that philosophy had not quite repressed in him the overbearing manners of the French gentleman, of which he elsewhere complains. "I gave a box on the ear to a vetturino," he says. "This is a great excess, according to the usage of the country—witness the vetturino who killed the Prince of Tresignano—and as I saw that he remained behind, and was a little uncomfortable lest he should make a complaint or do something else, instead of going on to Tolentino I stopped and supped at Valchimara."

Next day, this adventure having no sequel, the party proceeded to Macerata. It was easy now to see that they were on the way to Loretto, so full were the roads of comers and goers: many, who were not mere private individuals, but rich persons with followers, travelled on foot dressed as pilgrims; some with a standard and then a crucifix preceding them, they themselves being dressed in a suitable livery.

They reached Loretto in the evening. It was a little village, fortified against the incursions of the Turks, on a slight elevation, overlooking on one side a beautiful plain, on the other the Adriatic sea. The natives said, that in fine weather the mountains of Sclavonia could be descried on the eastern horizon.

Loretto had few inhabitants, save those in the service of the shrine, directly or indirectly; as for example,

hotel-keepers, who supplied very dirty lodgings; and dealers in wax-work images, Pater-nosters, Agnus Dei, Salvators, and "such-like wares;" for which there was a great number of fine shops, richly furnished. "*I laid out for my part fifty good crowns,*" says Montaigne, who seemed determined to exhaust every possible contradiction, and prove that the Sceptic who comes out of the Catholic Church, makes light of revelation, and sneers at the immortality of the soul, may not only look on Protestantism with almost priestly jealousy and dislike, but wear a cross over his coat and a holy relic under his shirt. These are the facts that explain why Montaigne has rarely been repulsed, except by rigid Jansenists. He trifled with Christian doctrines, but he did not form any new opinion about them; he laboured sometimes to reduce us to the level of beasts; but he practically acknowledged the efficacy of bits of consecrated wax, and freely spent his money at the stalls of relic-mongers.

At Loretto, all the priests, the churchmen, and the College of Jesuits, resided in a great modern palace, where also lodged a Governor, an ecclesiastic under the authority of the Legate and the Pope. The place of devotion—the *Santa Casa*—was a very old and mean little oblong house, built of brick. About a fifth was divided off, as especially holy. The image of Our Lady hung against one part of the wall was in wood: all the rest was covered with rich ex-votos; so that not one inch was there that did not shine with gold and silver. In the great church outside were many orna-

ments, but less than Montaigne expected. "I think," he says, "they melt the old ones and use them for other purposes. With great trouble," he continued, "and much favour, I could scarely find a place to lodge a framed tablet with four silver figures attached, representing Our Lady, myself, my wife, and my daughter. At the foot of mine there is inscribed on the silver: '*Michael Montanus, Gallus Vasco, Eques Regii Ordinis*, 1581;' under that of my wife, '*Francisca Cassaniana, uxor;*' under that of my daughter, '*Leonora Montana, filia unica.*' All these are in a row kneeling before Our Lady."

For the benefit of future pilgrims, Montaigne minutely describes the situation of his ex-voto; and mentions, that instead of hanging it on a nail by a silver chain he had provided, they fastened it quite to the wall. It is useless to comment on the *naïveté* of this extraordinary narrative, which has somewhat confirmed me in the supposition, on which, however, I would lightly insist, that to a certain extent Montaigne in his Essays played the part of the audacious infidel of our tea-parties, who directs his scorn against Moses to alarm the ladies, but goes quietly to chapel, and condescends to give a public hint that he is not quite a son of perdition — ready to mate with any strong-minded woman who worships reason — by admitting that he would never put up with "an irreligious wife!"

Among the rarities noted by Montaigne at Loretto was an ex-voto sent by a Turk, who, in some extreme

danger, "determined to try all expedients," had promised this compliment to the Virgin.

In the retired part of the chapel, to which no light of day penetrated, there was no ornament, no bench, no painting, no tapestry on the walls: no arms were allowed to be worn by those who entered; and no respect was paid to rank or persons: "We kept our Easter in that chapel, *a privilege not allowed to all.* It is necessary to bespeak places before-hand. A German Jesuit said mass to me, and gave me the communion." To this passage M. de Querlon appends a triumphant note: "Such acts of piety allow no doubt to subsist on the religion of Montaigne; therefore the incredulous and the sceptics, who have often claimed him, may scratch him out of their catalogue!"

"This place," proceeds Montaigne, "is full of miracles, concerning which I refer to the books. But there are many very recent instances of mischances happening to those who, from devotion, have carried away any portion of this building, even by permission of the Pope; and a little piece of brick, which was removed at the time of the Council of Trent, has been returned. . . . I was much pleased with this place, and will relate an experience of it. There was at the same time with me, Michel Marteau, Seigneur de la Chapelle, a young Parisian, very rich, with a great suite. I caused to be related to me, very particularly and curiously, the event of the cure of a leg which he said had just taken place: it is not possible to conceive anything more exactly like a miracle. All the

surgeons of Paris and Italy had failed. He had spent more than three thousand écus; his knee was swelled, useless, very painful, and for three years had been getting worse, redder, more inflamed, and larger. At last, having abandoned all medical aid for some days, as he was soundly sleeping, he dreamed that he was cured, and he seemed to see a flash of lightning. He awoke, cried out that he was cured, called his people, rose up, and walked. In this state of perfect health he returned to Loretto; for it was in consequence of a previous voyage he had been cured, since which he had been with us at Rome. This was all that could be learned for certain from him and his people."

It is just possible that Montaigne inserted many such passages in his journal, under the idea that it might fall under the eye of some frontier censor; but we can scarcely adopt such an explanation without some evidence. He goes on to talk of the miraculous removal of the House of Loretto from Nazareth to Sclavonia, and then to Italy; and tells how the people came from over the water, from the opposite coast, in troops, shouting out from afar off in their boats, prayers to the Virgin to return and inhabit with them. He insists a good deal on the disinterestedness of the priests, and even the workmen of the place; but with circumstances that suggest the idea of art in them and incredulity in him.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BATHS OF DELLA VILLA.

HAVING performed his religious duties, Montaigne determined to attend to his body, and to proceed to the baths of Della Villa. Leaving Loretto, he went first to Ancona. His faith at the shrine seems not to have been strong enough to entitle him to a cure; for he was suffering in one of his eyes, into which he had thrust his thumb at Rome one day in his hurry to salute a gentleman as he was walking with the celebrated d'Ossat. He was also in general ill-health.

By way of Fano and Urbino, he returned hastily into Tuscany and reached Florence. But here he stayed only a night, and proceeded on his way. The roads were full of processions: women and monks alike wore straw hats. Neither Orleans, nor Tours, nor Paris was so populous in its environs as Florence. When they had passed Pistoia they found the cherries ripening; and villagers came and offered them bunches of strawberries for sale.

By way of Lucca the Essayist at length reached

Della Villa, where he proposed to make a considerable stay. "The country is hilly," says he. "By the river side there is a plain of some two or three hundred paces, beyond which, along the slope of the mountain, rises the bath. There are thirty or forty houses fitted up for the service; the chambers are handsome and private. I visited them nearly all before making a bargain, and chose the handsomest, especially as to the view, which included the valley, the river, and the mountains around, all cultivated and green to the very summits; covered here with chestnut and olive-trees, there with vines planted upon the mountains, as it were in circular steps. From my chamber I could hear all night the gentle murmur of the river. Between the houses is a clear place for walking, open on one side like a terrace, with trees that form arches through which you can see the little plain I have mentioned; and some two hundred paces beneath you a pretty little village, also used by the bathers when there are many."

Montaigne lodged with a Captain Paulini; and was supplied with a parlour, three rooms, a kitchen, and a sort of attic for his servants. His host allowed him, as he minutely records, "salt, a napkin every day, a table-cloth every three days, all iron utensils for the kitchen, with candlesticks,—the whole for eleven écus, which made some sous more than ten pistoles, or fifty francs, for a fortnight." Does not this confirm the view that Michel de Montaigne was likely to meddle in household matters at his château far more than he chooses to confess? He proceeds: "Pots, dishes, and

plates of earthenware, we had to buy, also glasses and knives;" and so on.

Let us lightly pass over this residence at Della Villa, which occupies nearly all the rest of the journal. It is chiefly devoted to records of the taking of medicine and the waters, of their effects, and of the poignant physical sufferings of the writer. Many of the notes have all the effect, for a time, of humour; but at last become pathetic from sheer *naïveté* and earnestness.

Here and there are memoranda that may be referred to; as, for example, the constant comparisons instituted between the baths of Della Villa and those Montaigne had visited in France: also, what he says to the effect, that those waters took away blotches from the face: "a fact which he noted curiously for the service he owed to a very virtuous French lady." Then he tells a story:—An inhabitant of the place, a soldier named Giuseppe, being at sea in the wars was taken by the Turks. In order to gain his liberty he became a Turk, as many of the people of those parts in the mountains had done; and married in his new country. Following the trade of piracy he came to devastate these coasts, and advancing with a small party too far inland, was surrounded and made prisoner by the peasantry. Then he exclaimed that he had given himself up purposely, for he was a Christian; and so obtained his pardon. Some days afterwards he came to Della Villa, to the house opposite where Montaigne lodged, and entering, met his mother. She

asked him gruffly who he was, and what he wanted; for he still wore his sailor's dress, and it was strange to see him there, as he had been absent ten or twelve years. At last he revealed himself, and embraced his mother. She uttered a cry, fell down in a swoon, and remained so until next day. Though she came to her senses that time, her life was shortened, and she soon died. Meanwhile, Giuseppe was well received by all, abjured his errors in the church, and received the sacrament: but all this was mere deceit. He remained a Turk in heart; and at last slipped away, went to Venice, rejoined his old friends, and continued his cruises. But he fell once more into Christian hands, and being a man of extraordinary strength, and very skilful in sea matters, was kept in chains by the Genoese as leader of a gang in one of their galleys.—This narrative reminds us of the very insecure state of the Italian coasts at that time, constantly exposed to surprisal by Muslim buccaneers. Montaigne mentions several instances that occurred whilst he was there by the landing of pirates, and carrying away of fishermen and shepherds into slavery.

Montaigne patiently took the waters, and one day after describing their operation, says: "I was this morning writing to M. d'Ossat, when I fell into such painful thoughts of M. de la Boëtie, and remained immersed in them so long, without coming to myself, that it did me much harm."

It is an amusing illustration of Montaigne's character, that about this time he determined to cease writing

his journal in French, and to try the Italian. The least said about his proficiency in that language the better. However, his meaning is always tolerably clear. For some time he has little to say except about his drugs, his baths, and his regimen. I shall extract the few passages which may be called auto-biographical, or which in any way exhibit the Essayist as a noter of facts by the way-side:—

"I never saw so many serpents and toads. The children scarcely dare to go and gather strawberries on the mountain and in the brushwood for fear of being stung. . . . Living is cheap here: good veal costs three French sous a pound. The country is very up-and-down, and there are few level roads; yet some are agreeable and even; most of the paths among the hills are paved (with large pebbles). . . . I gave in the afternoon a ball to the peasant-girls, and danced in it myself, not to appear too reserved. In certain parts of Italy the women salute in the French style, by bending the knees. . . . The people here are divided into two parties, one French, the other Spanish. This division often leads to serious quarrels, which burst out even in public. The men and women of one party wear bunches of flowers over their right ear, and jaunt over their caps, and gather their ringlets on that side: the Spaniards do exactly the reverse. . . . I once got into a scrape with my friends by sticking a flower behind my left or Spanish ear. . . . Here the peasants and their wives are dressed like the gentlefolks. No peasant-girl is without white shoes, fine linen stockings,

and a light-coloured silk apron. They dance very well. . . . I think these baths clear my complexion. . . . My brother Mattecoulon felt the effect of the waters. . . .

"On Sunday afternoon I gave a ball with public prizes, as is the custom at these baths; and I was glad to be able to do this civility at the commencement of the year. Five or six days before, I caused the festival to be announced in all the neighbouring places: on the eve I had particular invitations sent to all the gentlemen and ladies present at the two baths; the prizes all came from Lucca. The custom is to give many, in order not to appear to favour one more than the others. In order to avoid all jealousy and suspicion, there are always eight or ten prizes for the women, and two or three for the men. I was solicited by many persons, who begged me not to forget, some themselves, some their nieces, others their daughters. Some days before, Messer Giovanni da Vincenzo Serminiati, my particular friend, sent me from Lucca, according to my request by letter, a leather girdle and a cap of black cloth for the men; and for the women, two aprons of taffetas, one green and one violet (for it is worth knowing that there are always some prizes more considerable than the others, to enable one to favour one or two women at one's choice); two other aprons of a lighter stuff; four cards of pins; four pairs of pumps, *one of which I gave to a pretty girl outside the ball;* a pair of slippers, to which I added a pair of pumps, to make one prize; three head-dresses of gauze, and three nets, which made three

prizes; and four little pearl necklaces,—making, in all, nineteen prizes for the women. The whole cost me a little more than six écus. Besides this I had five fife-players, whom I fed all day, and gave an écu in addition for them all; in which I was fortunate, for they are not always to be got so cheap." If Montaigne called this contempt of money-matters, what was his idea of order and prudence?

"The prizes were hung upon a gaily-decked-out hoop, in sight of everybody. We began the ball with the women of the neighbourhood; and I feared, at first, we should have no other company. But soon visitors came flocking in from all sides; and especially many ladies and gentlemen of the Signoria, whom I received and entertained as well as I could, so that they seemed satisfied with me. As it was rather hot, we went into the hall of the Palazzo Buonvisi, very suited to the purpose. When twilight came on, about twenty-two o'clock, I addressed myself to the most distinguished ladies present, and said that, being neither worthy nor bold enough to appreciate the beauty, the grace, and the amiability of all these young girls, I begged them to undertake the duty and distribute the prizes to the company as they were merited. We remained some time exchanging compliments, they refusing this delicate employment, and taking what I said for mere civility. At last I proposed a condition, namely, that I should be admitted to their councils, and I would give my opinion. Accordingly I went about, looking now at one and now at the other; and I always gave

weight to beauty and prettiness, observing that the pleasure of a ball depended not solely on the movement of the feet, but also on the countenance, the air, the good demeanour, and the grace of the whole person. The presents were then distributed, to some more, to others less, but properly. The lady who distributed them gave them in my name to the girls; and I, on the other hand, standing by, referred all the obligation to her. The whole affair passed off well, except that one of these damsels refused the prize offered her, and sent to me begging that, for the love of her, I would give it to another: which I did not think proper to do, because the one she selected was not one of the most agreeable." [Why not, Montaigne, have rewarded this act of friendship—you, who loved so much an ugly friend?]

"The mode of distributing these prizes [this long-drawn narrative is eminently characteristic] was as follows: the girls who had most distinguished themselves were called forth: each came in her turn and stood before the lady and me, who were sitting side by side. I presented the prize which seemed to me appropriate, after having kissed it, to the lady, who took it from my hand, gave it to the winner, and said, with an agreeable air, 'This present is given you by this gentleman: thank him!' 'Not at all,' said I; 'you owe the obligation entirely to this lady, who has judged you worthy, among so many others, of this little reward. I am only sorry that it is not more worthy of such and such qualities; adding words adapted to each case. Immediately after, the men were treated in the same way.

"I do not here mention the ladies and gentlemen, although they all took part in the dance. 'Tis, in truth, an agreeable and rare spectacle for a Frenchman to see so many peasant-girls, so pretty and dressed like ladies, dancing so well, that the best dancers could not surpass them, except that their figures and steps are different. I invited every one to supper, because in Italy a banquet is equivalent only to one of our lightest repasts in France. I was quit for several pieces of veal, and some pairs of chickens. I had at supper with me the Colonel of this Vicariate, M. Francesco Gambarini, a gentleman of Bologna and my friend, with a French gentleman, and no others. But I gave a place at table to Divizia, a poor peasant woman, who lives about two miles from the baths. This woman, with her husband, lives by the labour of her hands. She is ugly, thirty-seven years of age, with a goître in her throat, and can neither read nor write. But from her tenderest years there lived in the house of her father an uncle, who was always reading out in her presence Ariosto and some other poets; and her mind proved so adapted to poesy, that not only does she compose verses with extraordinary rapidity, but inserts in them the ancient fables, the names of the gods, of different countries, of sciences, and illustrious men, as if she had made a regular study thereof. She has made many verses for me. 'Tis true they are nothing but verses and rhymes; but the style is elegant and easy. There were at this ball more than a hundred strangers, although the season was not favourable,

because it was harvest-time. For then all the country people labour, without regard to fast or festival, picking morning and evening mulberry-leaves for their silk-worms; and the young girls are much occupied with this work." "I saw with pain the mulberry-trees stripped of their leaves, which represented winter in the midst of summer."

Montaigne, ever vain, introduced at Della Villa the custom that "persons of any rank" should leave their arms fixed up at the baths; but from this time forward his journal becomes almost exclusively a record of his ailments, and the measures he took to counteract them. In one place he says, with pleasant egotism: "Until now, *on account* of the little intercourse and familiarity I have had with these people, I had not very well sustained the reputation of wit and cleverness spread for me. Nobody had seen in me any very extraordinary faculty to marvel at and make much of me for." Yet he was asked to attend a consultation of doctors, the patient having resolved not to act on their prescription, except under Montaigne's advice. "I laughed to myself," says he, "but the thing had often happened to me before." Elsewhere he complains that "the working of the imagination" increased his sufferings in the head.

"We do not see," he observes, "among free nations the same distinction of rank as with us. Here the very humblest have something lordly in their manner. Even in asking alms they use, as it were, words of authority: as, 'Give me charity, will you?' or 'Give me

charity, do you hear?' The common expression at Rome is, 'Do me good for your own sake.'"

Getting tired of the baths, Montaigne made a trip to Florence, and saw some chariot races which pleased him, "because they reminded him of the ancient games." Again he notices the absence of beautiful girls at these public assemblies. In a conversation with Silvio Piccolomini he was delighted to find that that nobleman despised artillery, and adopted the opinions of Machiavelli on the subject. It is necessary to notice, that he went to the quarter where venal beauties were to be found, but was disappointed in what he saw. Still restless and ill, he determined to return to Della Villa. On his way he passed through Pisa, and visited the cathedral, where it is interesting to reflect that he may have elbowed Galileo, at that time aged eighteen, and preluding to his great discoveries by watching the regular oscillation of a lamp swinging from the roof. He formed an acquaintance with the actresses, and made them a present of fish. One of the actors put his kit into a raffle, and Montaigne risked an écu. There was a great fight between priests and monks in the Church of St. Francesco; fisticuffs were freely exchanged, and sticks, candlesticks, and tapers were hurled at one another by the combatants. A learned doctor maintained, in true Sangrado fashion, that with the exception of bleeding no other remedy for any disease was allowable save bathing; he drank a hundred times a-day, and went to sleep after dinner. Offers of service and money were freely made

to Montaigne, although the inhabitants had the reputation of churlishness; "but polite men always make others polite."

The stone began now to trouble him more than ever. "God knows what is the matter," says Montaigne; "His will be done." On reaching Lucca, he reflects on the agreeable life he had led in all his stations in Italy. "My chamber here," he goes on, "was very retired. I wanted for nothing: there was no inconvenience of any kind. Politeness is often wearisome, and becomes a bore. But I was rarely visited by the inhabitants. I slept; I studied when I pleased; and when the fancy took me, I went out and found everywhere companies of men and women, with whom I could converse and amuse myself for hours. Then there were the shops, the public places, the churches; all these things supplied me with means to satisfy my curiosity. Amidst these dissipations my mind was as tranquil as my infirmities and the approaches of old age allowed; and very few external causes of trouble presented themselves. I only felt a little the want of society such as I should have desired, being forced to enjoy the pleasures I tasted, alone and without communication."

The studies Montaigne alludes to were of the Tuscan language; in which, however, he found he made little progress. Leaving Pisa at length he returned to Della Villa, where he was received with infinite caresses; and resumed his baths at once. The increase of his sufferings is developed before us in many pages of familiar

writing. At one time he seems to have been on the point of death. A dreadful toothache coming in addition to his other ills, he was not able to support the pain, and took to his bed. Then, his peculiar disease kept him in a fierce state of suffering for some days; and at last, having obtained a temporary relief, he wrote as follows: "It would be too great weakness and cowardice in me if, being certain that I am always in danger of perishing in this way, and knowing, moreover, that death is gradually drawing nigh, I did not use every exertion, before reaching that point, to be ready to bear it, without grief, when the moment shall have arrived. For, in fine, reason recommends us to receive gladly the good that God is pleased to send to us. Now the only remedy, the only rule, the only science, to avoid all the ills which besiege man from all sides and at all hours, whatever they may be, is to be resolved to suffer them as necessary conditions of existence, or to terminate them courageously and promptly." We thus see, that for a moment at least, Montaigne, by his intense sufferings, was once brought to contemplate suicide, at any rate as a possible alternative.

CHAPTER XX.

ELECTION OF MONTAIGNE AS MAYOR OF BORDEAUX—HIS RETURN TO FRANCE.

At last Montaigne was wearied of the baths of Della Villa, and thought of going to finish his cure elsewhere. Early in September (1581) the toothache and neuralgia returned, with such fury, that "he passed the cruellest night he ever remembered: he was almost mad." Brandy held in the mouth allayed the pain. All the gentlemen at the baths paid him visits of condolence in his bed. The world was on the point of losing the Third Book of the Essays, the crowning part of the work.

But on the 7th of the same month news came that seems to have helped to effect a cure, by occupying Montaigne's imagination. By letters from M. de Tausin, dated Bordeaux, August 2d, he learned that "the preceding day he had been elected by unanimous consent to be Mayor of Bordeaux." His correspondent begged him to accept the post for love of his country.

Although he seems to have hesitated, yet he set off at once for Rome to receive the official letters, the despatch of which was announced to him, and packed up on his way, at Lucca, two great cases of goods for France.

Montaigne reached Rome on October 1st, and received there the despatches from the Jurats of Bordeaux. He had now, at any rate, made up his mind to return immediately to France. He sent off a heavy trunk to Milan, containing many precious things: "among others, a magnificent chaplet of *Agnus Dei*, the finest in Rome. It had been made expressly for the Ambassador of the Empress, and one of his gentlemen had got the Pope to bless it."

Mattecoulon, Montaigne's brother, obtained permission to remain behind at Rome for five months, in order to study arms; and received forty-three golden crowns for his expenses. Soon after he got into a difficulty. Being requested to act as second to a French gentleman, whom he scarcely knew, he fought, as was the custom in those days, with the second of the opposite party; and having disposed of his man, went and delivered his principal. The adversary appears to have been killed; and Mattecoulon, accused of unfair play, was put in prison, whence he was delivered by "a sudden and solemn recommendation from Henry the Third." Montaigne apologises for his brother's conduct in one of his Essays; but cannot help exclaiming: "Indiscreet nation that we are! We are not satisfied with letting the world know our vices and follies by report: we travel in order to publish them. Put three Frenchmen

in the deserts of Libya, and in a month they will be squabbling and scratching each other!"

Montaigne left Rome on the 15th of October, being accompanied as far as the first post by MM. d'Estissac, de Morens, and many other gentlemen. Others, as MM. du Bellay, d'Ambres, d'Allegres, wished to go forth, and had hired horses; but Montaigne made haste in order to save them the trouble. He evidently enjoyed all this worldly respect, paid in part to the Essayist, in part to the new "Mayor and Governor of Bordeaux."

The return-journey was performed with comparative rapidity. Yet the traveller, although he gave up seeing Genoa, turned aside to visit the field of Pavia, where Francis the First was defeated; and went to Milan, "the most populous city of Italy," which he compares to Paris. Thence proceeding by way of Turin, he passed the Mont Cenis (where only he ceased to write Italian), reached Chambery, crossed the Mont du Chat which overhangs the western bank of Lake Bourget, and having paid a visit to Madame de la Fayette, arrived at Montaigne on the last day of November, "having been absent seventeen months and eight days."

Montaigne alleges that he at first positively refused the honour voted him by his fellow-citizens who elected him as their Mayor, being sure, he says, that he was only chosen on account of the memory of his father's mayordom; but remonstrances being made to him, he accepted. Soon after arriving at Montaigne, indeed, he received the following letter from the king:—

"Monsieur de Montaigne,—As I hold in great esteem your fidelity and zealous devotion to my service, I have been much pleased to hear of your election as mayor of my city of Bordeaux. I have confirmed the more willingly this election, because it was brought about without intrigue in your absence. Therefore I order and enjoin you expressly, without delay or excuse, to return as soon as you receive these presents, and exercise the office to which you have been so legitimately called. By so doing you will be very agreeable to me, and the contrary will displease me greatly. I pray God, M. de Montaigne, to have you in his sacred keeping. "HENRY.

"*Paris, Nov.* 25, 1581."

The mayorship of Bordeaux was a high dignity in the sixteenth century. None but gentlemen following the profession of arms could legally exercise it. Bordeaux, in fact, was the third city in importance of all France, and had many peculiar privileges. The mayor took precedence, not only of all nobles in the province, but, with few exceptions, of all nobles in the kingdom. His office was military, and he often commanded armies. There was no other city where the magistrates held so great a state. When they went forth, forty archers, with scarlet casques, marched before them and the officers of the town. The mayor, dressed in a robe of white and red velvet, with ornaments of brocade, moved two or three paces in front of the Jurats, who were dressed in white and red damask.

Montaigne gives his own account of this high dignity. The office, which was merely honourable, without any emolument whatever, was held for two years; but a magistrate who made himself popular could be continued for two other years. This happened rarely. It happened to M. de Lansac and M. de Biron, and it happened to Montaigne. In a tone of grave irony, which some critics have mistaken for puerile boasting, the Essayist compares his own conduct, in first refusing then accepting the appointment, with the conduct of Alexander, who refused at the outset the freedom of the city of Corinth; but when he was informed that Bacchus and Hercules had formerly been citizens, accepted!

Before the revolution of Bordeaux in 1548, the mayors were appointed by the king; but in 1550, when the privileges of the city were restored, the mayors were made elective. Since that time the city of Bordeaux, though it sometimes struggled against the apparent toleration of the Court, had increased in favour. It was only in 1561, however, that it was allowed to replace the great bell in its tower. In 1566 the keys were returned to the city; so that, at the time of Montaigne's election, the office of mayor was as dignified and important as ever.

When Montaigne reached his château on the last day of November, 1581, despite the reception of the king's letter, he exhibited no hurry to go and take the oaths and inhabit the splendid mairie of Bordeaux. When he did so at last, he seized every opportunity to

be back at his château, where he had to write more Essays and prepare a new edition of the first two books.

There is a letter extant, dated May 21, 1582, from Montaigne, in which he excuses his absence. The Jurats, it appears, had been obliged to send one of their number to court on some important business, and wrote to Montaigne, asking him to come back. He replies:—

"Gentlemen,—I hope that the journey of M. de Cursol will prove of some advantage to the city, the cause which he has to plead being so just. You have put all the order possible in the affairs which had to be transacted; and as things are going on so well, I beg you will excuse for some time my absence, which I will, without doubt, shorten as much as the pressure of my affairs will permit me. I hope not to be long; meanwhile, I beg you will keep me in your good graces, and will command me, if the opportunity presents itself of my being employed for the public service and yours. M. de Cursol has also written to me and told me of his voyage. I recommend myself very humbly to you, and hope God will grant you a long and happy life.

"From Montaigne, this 21st of May, 1582.

"Your humble friend and servant,

"MONTAIGNE."

CHAPTER XXI.

FIRST PERIOD OF MONTAIGNE'S MAYORSHIP.

MONTAIGNE, however, entered on his functions as mayor early in 1582; and though he did not profess any great zeal, gave great satisfaction. "As soon as I arrived," he says, "I told them what they had to expect of me,—no memory, no vigilance, no experience, no vigour; but also no hatred, no ambition, no avarice, and no violence." A magistrate with these qualities, and the quiet wisdom of Montaigne, was well suited for the time in which he had to serve at first. It was quite calm. There was nothing to attend to but municipal duties.

At that period Guienne was governed for the King Henry the Third by the Maréchal de Matignon, who bore the title of Lieutenant-general; the King of Navarre, generally at war with Henry, bearing the title of Governor. The Maréchal had formerly been a zealous Catholic, though he had shown some humanity at the St. Bartholomew. In political and religious opinions, at the time of his appointment to represent

the king, he seems to have agreed with Montaigne; that is, with a Catholic cherishing philosophical doubts, and inclined to toleration from humanity, but holding very strict notions on obedience to royalty. He was never, however, on good terms with the King of Navarre, even in time of peace. He had distinguished himself by the taking of La Fère, at the siege of which Montaigne probably had some relations with him previous to his departure for Italy. Those who do not care much for the Essayist's political reputation, will readily assent to Dom de Vienne's assertion, which has aroused the ire of indiscriminate admirers, that he did little but obey the directions of the Maréchal. The latter was sent in place of Biron into Guienne, in order to carry out the treaty of Fleix, which Henry the Third, delivered from disquietude by the departure of the Duc d'Alençon, his brother, and therefore his enemy—such is the rule among kings—for the Low Countries had at length resolved to execute. He came to pacify, but found the task not easy. One of the first acts committed under his government was the unlawful seizure of the city of Perigueux by the Catholic lords and gentlemen of Perigord.

The early part of Montaigne's mayorship was quiet enough, however. Although the Ligue existed, it had not yet commenced its abominable public career. There seemed a chance that discord might cease. Among the articles agreed to at the Conference of Fleix was the sending of what was called a Chamber of Justice into Guienne—that is, a number of judges

selected from the Parliament of Paris, in order to replace a chamber chosen half by one party half by another, from the Catholic Parliament of Bordeaux, which had shown itself unjust and partial in its decisions. This commission was presided over by Antoine Seguier, and contained among others Claude du Puy and Jacques de Thou: the latter gives us the history of its movements. Its advocate was Loysel, and its Procureur-General Pithou.

The Commissioners intended first to establish their court at Libourne, but reflecting on the poverty of the lawyers who would have had to come thither from Bordeaux,—the pleaders did not occur to them—they made up their minds to go to the capital. It was on Jan. 26, 1582, that they held their first sitting at the Convent of the Jacobins. Montaigne was present as mayor. A vast crowd had collected to welcome the new judges—a way of expressing hatred of the old ones. The first sitting was occupied with a discourse or remonstrance by Loysel, who displayed so much eloquence that Montaigne paid him a special compliment. He spoke of equal justice in a manner that caused some excitement at Court. The session of Bordeaux lasted six months, during which time the members of the commission spent their time in the society of the principal men of the province; and formed friendships that in many cases were lasting. It was then that De Thou made the acquaintance of Montaigne, who appears to have received hospitably at his splendid "Mairie" all these strangers. "The Mayor," says De

Thou, "was a man of great frankness, disliking all constraint, who entered into no cabal. He was very learned in our contemporary history, but especially in that of Guienne, his country, which he knew perfectly."

De Thou tells us a good deal about the state of society and learning at Bordeaux, during the period at which it was governed by Montaigne. At that time the Rector of the College was Elie Vinet, who was occupied in retouching his "Ausonius." He was old, and talked much of his friends Turnebus, Muretus, Grouchy, Guerente, and Buchanan. De Thou saw the last letters which Buchanan managed to send him by the Scotch merchants who came to fetch wine from Bordeaux. They were written with a trembling hand, it is true, but in a firm style that showed nothing of the weakness of old age. Buchanan complained, indeed, rather of the length of life, said that he had quitted the Court, and had retired to Stirling; and added the following words, which De Thou says he always remembered: "I now think only of withdrawing without noise and dying quietly. As I look upon myself already as a dead man, intercourse with the living is no longer proper for me."

Elie Vinet's college had formerly been very flourishing; but it had fallen into disrepute by means of the new College of Jesuits established in the city. He used to say that of one good college two bad ones had been made. Montaigne, an admirer of the Jesuits, would not have subscribed to this opinion; and probably patronised the order. Perhaps some of the

many vehement and ill-judged attempts to prove his ultra-orthodoxy are exhalations of the gratitude of that society, which forgets neither its friends nor its enemies.

Claude du Puy also at this time made the acquaintance of Montaigne. It is to him that Scaliger attributes the saying: "What the devil do we care to know whether Montaigne liked white wine or red?" and he seems to have been a strange personage. He got information once that there were some curious MSS. in an Abbey; and went there with several friends, who talked to the guardian whilst he threw the manuscripts out of window to his people, who carried them off. He possessed all known books—sent for every new publication in Italy—never showed his library to any one, saying it was all confusion. He lost many books during the Ligue. He was very fond of Agen; so fond, that he quarrelled furiously with P. Pithou, a native of that place, for wishing to leave it. Whilst at Bordeaux he seems to have been on good terms with Montaigne, of whom we have a letter written to him afterwards, in 1584.

I shall give it, merely premising that nothing further is known of the circumstance to which it alludes, though we may infer that M. de Verres had committed some one of those atrocities which were so common in the civil wars, and which Montaigne, seeing that he was an old friend or dependant, wished to be dealt leniently with. Dupuy was at that time Conseiller in the Parliament of Paris, but deputed

as a judge to Saintes: Montaigne had gone on a visit to Castera, an estate belonging to his brother Thomas, married to Jaquette d'Arsac, step-daughter of La Boëtie.

"Sir,—The action of the Sieur de Verres, the prisoner, who is very well known to me, deserves that in judging him you should give way to your natural gentleness, if that can ever be exercised in such a case. He has done a thing not only excusable according to the military laws of this age, but necessary, and, as we judge, praiseworthy: he did it, doubtless, in a hurry, and against his will. The remainder of the course of his life is irreproachable. I beg you, sir, to direct your attention to this: you will find the character of this act to be such as I represent, and that punishment is sought in a way more malicious than the act itself. If it be of any service, I will add that he is a man who has been brought up in my house, is related to many respectable families, has always lived honourably, and is very much my friend. By serving him you will lay me under a great obligation. I beg you very humbly to consider him as recommended by me.

"MONTAIGNE."

Dr. Payen calls this a "fine missive:" it certainly informs us of a kind action, but is full of manifest special pleading, and is, in fact, a solicitation to a

judge to allow a criminal to escape from reasons of private friendship.

Pierre Pithou, one of the most distinguished men of his times, formed one of the learned society collected at Bordeaux during Montaigne's administration, by the visit of the Commission. We have a curious collection of the sayings of his brother François, which will give a fair idea of the kind of conversation introduced at the meetings of such men. "Monsieur de Thou is not learned, except in poetry and eloquence. . . My brother (Pierre) was jealous that Cujas mentioned me in his testament. . . M. Cujas used to get drunk. . . . The four great men of our age are Cujas, Rançonnet, Scaliger, Turnebus: all the rest are sellers of shells. . . Rançonnet was poor. The Dictionary of Charles Estienne is by him. His daughter died on a dunghill; his son was executed; his wife was struck by lightning; and *he* ended his days in a prison. . . I am now seventy years old; I never heard of the miracles of Loyola till after the Jesuits were established. . . I said to the king, at the Conference of Fontainbleau, that images, after all, were not very ancient: he answered, 'Would to God there were none!' . . When Jodelle was dying, he exclaimed, 'Open the windows, that I may once more see that beautiful sun.' He was somewhat of a natural philosopher." This may be the origin of one of the legends of the death of Rousseau. Pithou goes on: "M. de Thou escaped from Paris during the Ligue, disguised as a Cordelier. . . Turnebus was a gentleman, Baïf was mad, and Cujas' first

wife was a Jewess. . . Cujas used to say that he never read a book which taught him nothing, save Arnobius on the Psalms. . . I heard Cahier preach that the Virgin came to save women. . . When I had nothing to do at Paris, I used to go and see Thevet; and I did so never that on entering he did not cry out, 'I am working at that ass of a Ptolemy again.' . . Monsieur Loysel was a good man, but not learned. . . Passerat believes that Cicero knew nothing. . . Jean Bodin was a sorcerer, as M. le Président Fauchet related to me. One day they were talking of going somewhere, when a stool moved. Bodin said, 'That is my good angel, who tells me it would not be prudent to do so.'" . . There was, indeed, a common report in the sixteenth century that Bodin was inclined to Judaism, or much worse: and that he had a demon or familiar spirit, like that of Socrates, who always restrained him from going when it was not expedient, but never urged him. "When," says M. Antoine Allou, "he used to be talking to his friends of his affairs, and advising the undertaking of something, all at once they heard some of the furniture of his room, as a stool, or such-like article, make a noise as if shaken: then he would say, 'My genius does not advise me to do so.'" M. Baudrillart, in his laborious life of Bodin, omits to mention this tradition, which would have thrown great light on that extraordinary work of the superstitious and narrow-minded advocate of monarchy, "The Demonomanie." I shall only add here, that it is curious to find these allusions to spirit-rapping in the sixteenth century.

De Thou, as I have said, gives a very complete account of the residence of the Commission in Guienne, which lets us into the state of things there. In February they took a holiday; and some of them went to visit Medoc. Loysel, Pithou, and De Thou were of the party. The last describes the Landes and the pine-trees on the borders of the sea. These Landes were full of bees and tortoises, and covered with villages, large but wide apart: the peasantry were rich by industry, in spite of the poverty of land. They went, among other places, to the Teste de Buch, celebrated for its oysters, alluded to by Rabelais: "I wager a hundred oysters of Buch," says the dealer in the famous bargain for the sleep with Panurge. De Thou writes: "The table was laid out on the beach: as the tide was down, oysters were brought in baskets: we chose the best, and swallowed them as fast as they were opened; they had an agreeable violet taste, and are so wholesome that one of our valets ate a hundred without coming to any harm. As we sat, in the freedom of this repast, we talked of the beauty of the place sometimes; sometimes of affairs of state; then of the famous Captal de Buch; and sometimes of those great men to whom Cicero alludes in a passage of his works, who did not disdain to employ a decent and necessary repose in resting their minds from great occupations, or in picking up shells on the sea-shore." This naïve confession, that all these legal gentlemen thought themselves great, is very amusing. The celebrities of that age, whom posterity has forgotten

most completely, are the men who had the greatest confidence in their immortality. No one really believed in, or understood Montaigne; and we have read Pithou's list of great men!

From the Teste de Buch the party was lured on, by the weather, to visit the rest of the country of Medoc, and the castle of M. de Candale at Castelnau. They found that learned and scientific nobleman there, examined his laboratories, and talked with him of his voyage of discovery in the Pyrenees.

De Thou gives an account of several trips of this kind. In one of them he says, "I was walking with Chartier towards evening along a little path between two steep banks. Suddenly a peasant, armed as they nearly all are in this country, appeared, and called out to me, asking me if that was not Chartier who went before. I asked him the reason of his question; he answered, 'I shall be glad to know it is Chartier, for the report goes he has been hanged.' I called out to Chartier to stop and hear the peasant, who, however, disappeared. This meeting was of ill omen, for shortly afterwards Chartier was, indeed, hanged."

On returning to Bordeaux, De Thou found the Chamber occupied in examining criminal causes, and had to proceed to the examination of Rostaing, a gentleman guilty of great crimes, who was condemned with much rigour, which caused it to be said throughout the city that for thirty years no example of such severity against a gentleman had been seen.

De Thou tells a curious story illustrative of the state

of Guienne at that time. A certain Captain Guillard, a brave and determined man, was the declared enemy of a neighbour, pretending that the said neighbour had assassinated his brother in a cowardly manner. Collecting a band of scoundrels, he came at night and attacked his enemy's house, broke open the door with a petard, killed the owner, who appeared sword in hand to defend himself, massacred his wife, his brother, and servants. The crime was soon followed by punishment. His people, pillaging the house, accidentally set fire to a barrel of powder, which blew up, and disabled them so that they were unable to escape. They were all seized and carried in to Bordeaux, horribly mutilated, on a cart. The scene, as they traversed the streets, all burned and bloody, is described as being terrific. The minor criminals were interrogated in the cart, and at once transferred to the wheel. Guillard, wrapped up in a sheet, according to the custom of Bordeaux, was led before the judges; and as he admitted his crime with effrontery, he was speedily condemned to death.

The Session of the Court lasted six months. At its conclusion, Loysel made a second long speech, in which he alluded to the illustrious lawyers who had practised in Guienne, particularly mentioning among others, Pommier, La Chassagne, La Boëtie, and Montaigne, with great praise. The Court then transferred its sittings to Agen, whence Loysel sent a copy of his second speech to Montaigne, with a letter, in which he called him "one of the principal ornaments, not only of Guienne, but of all France." This

letter, which was, in fact, a dedication, called forth a present of a copy of the first edition of the Essays in quarto, which still exists with the autograph of Montaigne.

Montaigne was not present to hear Loysel's second Remonstrance. The fact is, that in August he had been sent to Court "for the affairs of the city, with ample Memoirs and Instructions." What were these affairs, however, has not been noted. We merely know that his mission was important, and was quite successful. We may refer to this visit to Paris, Montaigne's chief experience of the absurd and licentious devotion of Henry the Third, to which he more than once refers, and which was then in its full paroxysm.

CHAPTER XXII.

SECOND PERIOD OF MONTAIGNE'S MAYORSHIP.

MONTAIGNE seems to have been quite satisfied with his own conduct during the period that elapsed between his first election and August 1, 1583; and most of the people of Bordeaux evidently agreed with him, for he was re-elected. "They did more for me in giving me the office again," he says, "than when they gave it me at first." He does not mention, however, that at the second election there was great opposition. The validity of the proceedings, indeed, was attacked before the Parliament of Bordeaux; and this move proving unsuccessful, an appeal was made to the Council of State, on the plea that the renewal of Montaigne's term of office was contrary to the ordonnance of 1550. The election was confirmed; but in the Registers of the Council of State it was expressly stated, that this was done on the understanding that it should not be taken as a precedent. Montaigne and the Jurats, however, sent up a strong protest against this minute; (it is

preserved, dated March 5, 1584); and they appear to have gained their point.

In 1583 a rather curious incident, illustrative of the state of communications in France at that period, occurred. The chief trade of Bordeaux was carried on by the rivers, and it was very important to it that they should be free. But in this year the inhabitants of Mas de Verdun threatened to stop the loaded boats that plied between Bordeaux and Toulouse, in consequence of which Montaigne was sent to remonstrate with the King of Navarre; and his instructions have been preserved.

A remonstrance was addressed in 1583 by Montaigne, as mayor of Bordeaux, and the Jurats of the city, to Henry the Third, full of humane and wise suggestions. It set forth, that according to ordonnances "conform to reason, all taxes should bear equally on all persons, the strong supporting the weak; it being reasonable that those who had large means should pay more than those who lived on chance and by the sweat of their brows;" and then went on to complain, that even the sons of Presidents and Conseillers were declared by the Parliament exempt from taxation, so that the whole burden fell upon the poor. Further, it had been the privilege of the city of Bordeaux to appoint sworn Taverniers and Cabaretiers to sell wine, "the only source of revenue of the inhabitants;" but now edicts had been passed, making these posts venal in order to obtain money for the Court. "Moreover, in consequence of the misery of the time, so great since

the misfortune of the civil wars, many persons of all sexes and qualities are reduced to mendicity, and nothing is to be seen in the cities and the fields but an unlimited multitude of poor. This would not happen," says Montaigne, "if the edict issued by the late King Charles of good memory, whom God absolve, were executed,—to the effect, that every parish should be obliged to support its poor, and not allow them to wander elsewhere." This edict was equivalent to the Poor Law of Queen Elizabeth; but edicts in France were seldom executed for long, if at all. Montaigne also complains that the city was infested by crowds of pilgrims to St. Jacques of Compostello, and other shrines; who begged, to the great scandal of the public; whilst the priors and administrators of hospitals, mostly of royal foundation, neglected or refused to feed them: the remedy proposed for this latter grievance is a threat, that if the pilgrims were not properly attended to by the charities instituted for that purpose, their property would be seized. We are left to conjecture the success of this remonstrance.

In 1583, Henry the Third drove away Marguerite of Navarre from his court; her coach was stopped and searched at Bourg la Reine, and Madame de Bethune and Montaigne's friend, Madame de Duras, were arrested "on account of their scandalous lives." This violent scene caused, of course, great soreness between the two Courts, although Marguerite had long ceased to have anything to do with the affections of her husband.

A little while after another disagreeable incident took place. Henry of Navarre had long claimed the surrender of Mont-de-Marsan, a portion of his patrimony: but the Maréchal de Matignon, knowing the intentions of the Court, had put off complying for years. At length force was resorted to, and Mont-de-Marsan was taken. One of the first persons to whom the King of Navarre wrote to explain these proceedings was to Montaigne, in his official character as Mayor of Bordeaux; and the correspondence, afterwards entrusted to Duplessis Morny, was long continued. Duplessis, writing on November 25, says, "The King of Navarre has written to you to explain how he entered into his town of Mont-de-Marsan,—to you who, in your tranquillity of mind, are neither stirring nor to be stirred by little. We wrote to you that you may be a witness, if needs be, with those who judge ill of us." Elsewhere the same correspondent says, "Our councils depend on what goes on where you are: for *we* only ward off the blows aimed against us. . . . I know you are doing us all the good you can."

These letters contain nothing else to extract illustrative of Montaigne's biography. They are merely an additional proof that, occupying one of the highest positions in the province, he was necessarily mixed up with all important transactions.

But the aspect of the times was now changing. The comparative tranquillity which enabled Montaigne to gain so good a reputation as a magistrate was beginning to be disturbed; and it was evident that his

post would not much longer be a sinecure. The first year of his office had scarcely passed away, indeed, before he seems to have been disgusted with his dignity. He tried afterwards to persuade himself that he had never heartily entered into his work: "The Mayor and Montaigne were always two persons." This is in a passage which may have suggested the famous "All the World's a Stage." . . . . "Most of our occupations are farcical: *Mundus universus exercet histrionum:*"—

"Le monde universel sans fin joue une farce,"

to use the words of Mademoiselle de Gournay's translation.

Towards the end of 1584 Montaigne, wearied of the city and its busy life, started off for his château, where he seems to have passed the winter, not expecting, doubtless, to be honoured by a royal visit. I have alluded more than once to the connexion, more or less intimate, that existed between Montaigne and the Court of Navarre. It began, possibly, by his acquaintance with Marguerite, which was of early date—before her marriage and before the St. Bartholomew. But the Court of Navarre, held now at Pau, now at Nérac, now at Agen, now shifting over the country, was so completely neighbouring Montaigne and the places where our philosopher was accustomed to be, that we may suppose the connexion to have existed from a very early period. Our Essayist, however, was a strict royalist; and not only in time of war publicly declared against Henry of Navarre,

but actually fought against him on many occasions. All these facts are singularly obscure, and cannot be understood if we do not remember the peculiar nature of a civil contest, in which the combatants were sometimes not divided even by animosity, and were with difficulty kept from stopping in the midst of a battle to talk of their private affairs with their enemies for the day.

By his acquaintance with Corisande d'Andoins, who at last had become the declared mistress of Henry the Fourth, Montaigne could get at the private key to favour, whenever he chose to use it. Henry was, politically speaking, a favourite with him, though judged calmly and without passion. Having mentioned a gentleman, a friend of his, who became nearly mad from excessive attention to his master's business, he says:—"That master has himself described his character to me, saying that 'he sees the weight of accidents, like any other man; but when they are without remedy, he makes up his mind at once to endure them.' In other cases, after having ordered the necessary precautions, which he can do rapidly on account of the vivacity of his mind, he waits in repose what may follow. In truth, I have seen him thus, maintaining a great nonchalance and liberty of action and countenance in the midst of the most difficult affairs. I found him to be greater and more capable in evil than in good fortune: his losses seem more glorious than his victories—his mournings than his triumph." Elsewhere:—"I know a great prince who makes a happy use of the doctrine of destiny, whether

he believes in it, or merely takes it as an excuse for running great risks. May Fortune not be too soon weary of backing him!" This must have been written when there was a fair chance that Henry could reach the throne. And again: "I know a man who would rather be beaten than sleep whilst others are fighting for him, and who never saw without jealousy even his own people do anything great in his absence."

Our Essayist, now negociator, had, in May 1584, been on a mission from M. Maréchal de Matignon to Henry the Fourth at Nérac, and brought back a letter of compliment, ending with the words, "M. de Montaigne will tell you the rest." We do not know the subject of these negociations; but the king and the philosopher were on excellent terms. Perhaps it was then that Montaigne received the honorary title of Gentleman in Ordinary to the King of Navarre's Bedchamber, so that thenceforth he served two masters.

At any rate, in December of the same year, the truant mayor, occupied with his beloved Essays at his castle, received news that Henry of Navarre was about to visit him. Writing to the Jurats of Bordeaux, he said, two days before: "All the Court of Sainte-Foi are on my hands, and have appointed to come and see me." Henry made a détour through the country, and having dined at Gurson, came to sup and sleep at Montaigne. This event was very pleasing to its owner's vanity. He is defending his love of travel, and argues with his friends:—"What," exclaim they, "is not your house situated well, in good air, well supplied with all

things, and more than sufficiently large? Royal majesty has more than once lodged there in its pomp." In his journal we find the following more than usually elaborate entry:—

"*December* 19, 1584.—The King of Navarre came to see me at Montaigne, where he had never been before. He remained there two days, served by my people, without any of his officers: he allowed no assay (against poison), and slept in my bed. He had with him Messieurs the Prince de Condé, de Rohan, de Turenne, de Rieux, de Bethune, and his brother, de la Boulaie, d'Esternay, de Haraucourt, de Montmartin, de Montaterre, de Lesdiguière, de Poe, de Blacon, de Lusignan, de Clervau, Savignac, Ruat, Sallebeuf, La Rocque, Laroche, de Roux, d'Aucourt, de Luns, Frontenac, de Fabas, de Vivant and his son, La Burie, Forget, Bissouse, de Saint Sevrin, d'Auberville, and the lieutenant of the company of Monsieur le Prince, his Escuyer, who, with about ten other lords, slept here, besides the valets de chambres, the pages, and the soldiers of his guard. About as many went and slept in the villages. At the king's departure I had a stag started for him in my forest (the forest of Saint Claud, or Bretanord), which led him a chace of two days."

This residence of King Henry of Navarre at Montaigne, and the two days passed "in the fields" afterwards, are mentioned in the itinerary of Berger de Xivrey.

Early in February, 1585, Montaigne wrote to wish

a happy new year to the Jurats of Bordeaux, and vaguely hints that as soon as it is convenient he will return to his duties!

We cannot now expect to meet with public events that much influenced Montaigne intellectually. The formation of his mind and opinions has been seen. We have, therefore, only to trace his personal movements, and observe his conduct in the position to which—in part his literary reputation, in part the respect entertained for his family—had raised him. I have not thought it necessary to insist much on the negociations carried on between the King of Navarre and the Maréchal de Matignon, although the name of Montaigne, as mayor, now and then occurs in the correspondence; and even the long despatches of Duplessis-Morny, addressed to the mayor on the subject of the capture of Mont-de-Marsan, seem to me, as I have said, scarcely to add anything to Montaigne's biography. M. Grün, whose researches have been so indefatigable and meritorious, almost entirely disfigures his hero by insisting, with disproportionate emphasis, on his comings and his goings between Bordeaux and the wandering court of Henry of Navarre. Doubtless in these transactions he was not a mere cipher; but if he had assumed any individual attitude more traces would have remained in history. We may suppose him supplying to both parties the suggestions of his common sense and deep knowledge of human nature.

Montaigne returned to Bordeaux in the spring,

and found it in a state of great excitement. The Duke of Guise had already begun his famous enterprise, and was raising an army for the Ligue. A "newsletter," which the mayor writes (and the original of which, by the way, was discovered in England), will sufficiently paint the troubled colour of the times, and show that though Montaigne was ready to do his duty, it made him very nervous, and that he was anxious to be relieved from responsibility.

"To the Governor of Guienne.

"Monseigneur,—I this morning received your letter, which I have communicated to M. de Gourgues, and we dined together at the house of Monseigneur de Bordeaux (the Archbishop). As to the inconvenience attending the transport of money alluded to in your memoir, you see how difficult it is to provide against it: however, we will keep an eye on this matter as much as we can. I diligently set about seeking the man of whom you spoke to me. He has not been here, but Monseigneur de Bordeaux showed me a letter, in which he says he cannot come as he meant, as he has been warned you are suspicious of him. The letter is dated the day before yesterday. If I had found him I should, perhaps, have made use of gentle means, being uncertain as to your resolution; but I beg you, nevertheless, not to doubt that I shall decline nothing on which you are resolved, and that I have neither choice nor distinction concerning

any business or person respecting which you give your commands. I trust you may find in Guienne many whose will is as much at your service as mine. There is great talk of the galleys of Nantes coming towards Brouage. M. le Maréchal de Biron has not yet dislodged. Those who were ordered to warn M. d'Usee say that they cannot find him; and I believe he is no longer here, if he has been at all. We are careful of our gates and our watch, and are a little more attentive to them in your absence, which gives me fear, not only for the preservation of this city, but also for your own, knowing that the enemies of the king's service are well aware how necessary you are to it, and how badly off we should be without you. I fear that business will surprise you from all sides in the quarter where you are, so that you will be long in providing for everything, and that there will be many difficulties. If any new and important event happen I will send you an express, and you may infer that nothing stirs if you don't hear from me. I beg you also to consider, that these kind of movements are accustomed to be so unforeseen that, if they are to happen, I shall be seized by the throat without warning. I will do what I can to obtain news from all sides, and with this object will visit and study the tastes of all sorts of men. Up to this hour nothing has stirred. M. du Londel saw me this morning, and we discussed certain arrangements for the place, which I will visit to-morrow early.

"Since I began this letter, I have learned at the

Chartreux that two gentlemen, professing to belong to M. de Guise, have passed near this city ; they came from Agen, but I have not been able to learn whither they have gone. At Agen they are expecting you to go there. The Sieur de Mauvesin went out as far as Canteloup, and returned after having learned some news. I am looking for a certain Captain Rous, to whom * * * * has written, to draw him over with many promises. The news of the two galleys of Nantes ready to land in the Brouage, with two companies of foot, is certain. The Sieur de la Courbe has told M. le Président Nesmon that M. d'Elbeuf is on this side of Angers, and has lodged at his father's house, and is advancing towards Lower Poitou with four thousand foot and four or five hundred horse, having rallied the forces of M. de Brissac and others, and that M. de Mercure is to join him. There is a report that Monsieur du Maine is coming to take the command of the forces assembled in Auvergne, and that by the county of Forest he will advance upon the Rouergue and towards us; that is to say, against the King of Navarre, against whom all this is directed. M. de Lansac is at Bourg, followed by two armed vessels. His command is naval. I tell you what I learn, and I mix the town reports that seem probable with truths, in order that you may know all. Begging you very humbly to return as soon as business will permit you, and assuring you that we shall meanwhile spare neither our care, nor, if necessary, our life, to preserve all in obedience to the king,—

"Monseigneur, I very humbly kiss your hands, and beg God to preserve you.

"From Bordeaux, Wednesday, at night, May 22.

"Your very humble servant,

"MONTAIGNE."

"I have seen nobody from the King of Navarre; they say that M. de Biron has seen him."

We see from this hurriedly-written report that Montaigne was waking and watching over the safety of the city committed to his charge; but how anxiously he begs the Maréchal to come and relieve his anxiety! True lovers of the Essayist will not be sorry to find him shrinking from the repulsive duties of a subordinate office during a civil war, which compels him to apologise for having meditated "gentle measures," instead of proceeding to the summary execution of some suspected person. We can never feel so comfortable in his society when serving the despicable Henry the Third, no matter from what motives, as when meditating new sentences in his tower, or jogging along the highways of France and Italy in search of health and experience. The picture, however, would not be complete if due importance were not given to what is known of "the public life" of Montaigne.

The Château Trompette had been in danger of being betrayed to the Liguers, and Montaigne assisted Matignon in his vigorous measures to preserve it for the king. M. Grün conjectures, that about this time it was that it was thought necessary to make

the great display of troops which is mentioned in one of the Essays. There was some fear that the troops would mutiny and murder their officers. On this account it had been proposed to restrict them from firing a salute, but Montaigne advised that no suspicion should be shown, and the whole affair in consequence passed off well.

In April, the Mayor had been on another mission to the King of Navarre, who was at war with the partisans of the Ligue, but not exactly with Henry the Third; and in June we find him on a similar service: but all we know of these journeys is that Henry placed as much confidence in the ambassador as did those who sent him, and that he naturally assumed the character of a mediator.

One of Henry of Navarre's letters is worth quoting:—

"To my Cousin, M. le Maréchal de Matignon.

"My Cousin,—I was very glad to hear such particular news of you by M. de Montaigne. I have charged him to give you news of me, and to assure you more and more of my entire friendship. Trusting entirely to him, I beg you to believe him as you would myself. I also pray the Creator to keep you, my Cousin, in his very holy protection.

"From Bergerac, April 23, 1585."

There is a postscript to iterate Henry's wish that

Matignon should accept Montaigne's statements implicitly: "My Cousin, I beseech you to believe M. de Montaigne."

Many other letters have been published, some known to have been addressed about this time to Montaigne, others supposed to have been so; but as no additional fact or inference can be derived from them, it seems useless here to reproduce them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PLAGUE OF 1585.

About this time the whole province of Guienne was in a state of frightful disorder, and Perigord especially. The King of Navarre and his partisans occupied many strong places, whence they made incursions for subsistence on every side, whilst the Catholic bands in the service of the Ligue also overran the country. From March to August, says Palma Cayet, the soldier lived upon the peasant; but there was no fighting, only pillage. To this Montaigne alludes, where he writes: "An increased weight of our troubles during several months fell right upon me. I had, on the one hand, the enemy at my gates; on the other the Picoreurs, or Marauders, a worse enemy; and suffered all military outrages at once." That was a time of absolute anarchy, in which plunder was carried to such an extent that Montaigne feared complete ruin. "The people," he continues, "suffered largely then; not present danger alone, but future also. The living had their share; so had those yet unborn. They

robbed the people, (and me also, consequently,) even of hope, snatching from it what it had laid by for the years to come. Moreover, I suffered all the inconvenience which comes from moderation in such cases. I was spoiled on all hands. To the Ghibeline I was a Guelf, and to the Guelf a Ghibeline. The situation of my house, and the acquaintance of the men of my neighbourhood, gave me one face: my life and my actions another. There were no formal accusations, for I gave no hold; but silent suspicions were rife." Matters went so far, that Montaigne began to look out among his friends for one with whom he could find shelter for his "needy and dishonoured old age." But he cast his eyes around in vain. "To fall from so high you must have the arms of a solid affection to receive you." At last he perceived that the only sure way was to depend upon himself. The weapon he found most useful was patience; and he doubts "whether he can decently acknowledge" *how* patiently he bore the sufferings of others as well as his own.

Montaigne appears suddenly to have abandoned his official duties to go and take care of his family and property. At that time a terrible plague burst out in Bordeaux, supposed to have been engendered in a filthy bog to the west of the city; and some biographers seem to believe that he fled away in alarm, with so many other of the healthy inhabitants. But he very clearly implies that he was engaged in protecting his estate, as well as he could, when the pestilence reached that district and entered his very

castle. Never was there so vehement an attack. Contagion had often approached, but, such was the salubrity of the air round his castle, had never before reached it. Now it did so, and strange effects were produced. The sight of his house beeame frightful to him. No further guard was kept; everything was abandoned. "I, usually so hospitable," he says, "was obliged, painfully, to seek out a retreat for my family. We were a wandering family, fearful to our friends and to ourselves, creating horror wherever we went. Whenever one of us felt a pain, even in the little finger, we were obliged to decamp; for at such time every disease is supposed to be plague. All this would have touched me much less if I had not had to suffer the sufferings of others, and to serve wretchedly for six months as a guide to this caravan. Not a hundredth part of the people of the neighbourhood escaped. My revenue there depends on labour. The land a hundred men cultivated for me has long been lying idle. What an example of resolution was given by the common sort! Generally, every one abandoned all care of life: the grapes—principal produce of the country—remained hanging from the vines. All with indifference prepared to meet death, that evening or next day, with a countenance and a voice so little troubled that it seemed as if it was a universal and inevitable condemnation. How the company we are in acts differently in the way *we* meet death! But these poor creatures—since they all were dying in the same month, children, youths, old men—they

seemed no longer to wonder, neither did they weep. I saw some who feared to remain behind, looking on the world as a horrible solitude. No one appeared to care for aught save sepulture. It grieved them to see corpses strewing the fields, at the mercy of the wild beasts that flocked thither at once. Healthy men dug their graves in time; others got into them living. One of my workmen, with his hands and feet, drew the earth over him as he was dying."

In the year 1854 the cholera, and another disease called the suette, made similar ravages in those districts. I heard some strange stories as I passed through the town and village, filled with refugees from Bordeaux. On arriving there the place seemed half deserted. Later, as I crossed the chestnut forests towards Muçidan, they told me of a village where all had perished save one miserable man, and he had gone mad. The pathetic narrative of Montaigne never appeared to me so full of meaning.

The "caravan" of which Montaigne speaks was composed of his mother, then aged seventy-seven, his wife, his daughter, and his servants. One of the first places he took it to was Libourne. He wished to be as near as possible to Bordeaux, whither, however, he declined proceeding, for the plague continued to rage there with terrible intensity. The Maréchal de Matignon, expressing the wishes of the Jurats, wrote to him, with the request that he would come and preside over the election of his successor. This was in July. Montaigne at once made up his mind not to go. He

knew the terrible state of the city. No one who could go elsewhere remained within the walls. An attempt had been made to raise money to send away the poor people, but it failed. There was a general panic; no one would subscribe or pay a tax, or buy property advertised for sale. The mortality was so great, that according to the Registers of the Parliament, eighteen thousand persons out of less than forty thousand died. "They die like flies," says a Jurat, in a report. The College was closed. "The city was a vast hospital." Some of these circumstances are accumulated by Dr. Payen, in answer to a charge of egotism and cowardice lightly made, and immediately attenuated by M. Grün. All we need add is, that there was nothing either heroic or bad in the act of Montaigne. It was exactly in accordance with his easy character, that moved in the middle region. The period of his office was to expire the next day. What was asked of him was a mere formality. Very naturally, therefore, he answers:—

"Gentlemen,—I have just received here by accident the message sent from you to me by M. le Maréchal. I would spare neither life nor any other thing for your service; but I will leave you to judge of what use my presence would be at the approaching election before venturing to come into the city, considering the bad state in which it is, especially dangerous to people who come from such good air as I do. I will approach on Wednesday, as near as I can, to Feuillasse, if the disease does not reach there; and at that place, as I have

written to M. de la Mothe, I shall be very glad to have the honour of seeing some one of you to receive your commands, and those of M. le Maréchal. I recommend myself very humbly to your good graces, and pray God to give you, Messieurs, a long and happy life. From Libourne, this 30th of July, 1855.

"Your very humble servant and brother,

"MONTAIGNE."

The election took place in the absence of the Essayist, and M. de Matignon was named as his successor. Great must have been his joy at finding himself once more free at length from the burden of public employment. Despite some short-comings, he retired with honour, and the period of his administration was always referred to with respect, although it was generally felt that a more vigorous hand was required to replace his cautious one.

CHAPTER XXIV.

COMPLETION OF THE ESSAYS AND JOURNEY TO PARIS.

As soon as the pestilence had ceased its ravages, Montaigne returned to his château and spent his time in concluding the Third Book of the Essays, in preparing a new edition, and in endeavouring to restore order to his affairs. That was one of the most difficult periods through which he had to pass. The civil war was never more fierce, nor carried on in a more cruel and irregular manner. Up to that time Montaigne's residence, though undefended except by his reputation, had remained unmolested. As we have seen, he had boasted of the absence of all precaution, and its excellent results; but the times were past when such security could be indulged in.

A certain person—*un quidam*—laid a plan for surprising Montaigne and his house. He arrived alone at the gate, and impatiently begged admission. Montaigne knew him by name, and had reason to confide in him as a neighbour, and something even of a relative. He ordered the gate to be opened, as he did to all. The

man entered all affrighted, his horse blown and much harassed. The story he told was, that he had just been met, about half a league off, by one of his enemies—Montaigne knew this other also, and was aware of their quarrel—that this enemy had given him hot chace; that he had been surprised, and being with a party inferior in number, had been obliged to seek shelter; that he was very much troubled about his people, who must be either killed or prisoners. Montaigne very simply comforted, reassured him, and gave him to drink. Soon after, four or five of his soldiers presented themselves to enter; and then others, and others besides, all well-equipped and armed; so that at last there were twenty-five or thirty, all pretending to have the enemy at their heels.

This mystery began to excite Montaigne's suspicions. He was not ignorant in what kind of age he lived, and how his house might be envied. Many examples presented themselves of such adventures. However, thinking it to be of no use to have begun to be civil if he did not go on, he continued his former behaviour, and received all hospitably. The party remained in their saddles, forming a menacing group in the court. No doubt Françoise and Léonore, and the frightened servants, peered at them from the windows. The chief was in the house with Montaigne. He had refused to have his horse sent to the stable, saying that he must go further. He had now nothing more to do but to murder his host, and take possession of the château. Suddenly he rose, went forth,

and putting himself at the head of his men, who looked wonderingly at him, galloped away across the court, passed the little triangular space between the tower and the out-buildings, and had soon disappeared. Some time after he boldly related the story, and acknowledged that Montaigne's confiding countenance and frank manner had restrained him.

During all this period Montaigne occasionally, despite his age and infirmities, sallied forth, as all loyal gentlemen were bound to do, and joined in the partisan warfare carried on in Perigord against the Protestant lords. The allusions to these adventures, scattered through the Essays, especially towards the end, leave no doubt on the matter. We have here an additional touch to Montaigne's portrait, quite neglected by most of his critics. He lays down the pen from time to time, puts on the cuirass, girds on the sword, mounts his horse and sallies forth, not actuated by any enthusiasm, but partly from a sense of duty, partly from a love of that kind of life, its freedom, its excitement, its very danger: even the sound of warlike music was an attraction to him. That he continued these episodes in his old age is certain. "Of late," he says in one place, "in the labours of war, when the whole night is occupied, as commonly happens, after five or six hours my stomach begins to be troubled, a vehement headache comes on, and I never reach daylight without vomiting. When others go to breakfast, I go to sleep; and after that I am as gay as before." He says he often forgot the watchword which he had

"given or received" a few hours before; mentions being present at the storming of little forts; and, in fact, leaves no doubt that he did not wear the sword as a mere ornament. All attempts, however, to discover in what "affairs" Montaigne engaged have failed. They were probably insignificant skirmishes and obscure sieges, undertaken in the irregular warfare carried on between the royal partisans and those of Henry of Navarre, in the years 1586 and 1587. It is singularly illustrative of the character of the times that Montaigne, (who publicly boasts of the part he took in this war against the Protestants,) on the 24th of October, 1587, three days after the battle of Coutras, again received and entertained at dinner in his château the victorious Henry on his way to Sainte-Foi.

It may easily be imagined, that amidst such circumstances it was an effort of philosophy in Montaigne to continue the preparation of his Essays. He worked on, however, and at length completed the thirteen additional Essays which form the Third Book, all very important for their length and matter, and determined to go to Paris to superintend their publication. This was early in 1588.

On the way he met with another adventure, of a similar kind to the one already related. There had been a truce published, but the country remained in a most insecure state. Montaigne was advancing by way of the Limousin towards Orleans. His being abroad became known, and at once two or three "cavalcades" from various points set out to catch

him. One of these joined him on the third day; and he was charged at once by fifteen or twenty masked gentlemen, followed by a wave of *argoulets*. He seems to have resisted a little and then surrendered. They led him into the depths of a neighbouring forest, dismounted him, robbed him, searched his coffers, took his money-box, shared his horses and baggage. Then began a discussion as to ransom, which they placed so high that he saw they did not understand his worldly position. There was a moment when they were on the point of putting him to death. But Montaigne did not flinch, and appealed to the truce; saying, moreover, they ought to be satisfied with what they had got; and would promise no ransom. After two or three hours, they put him on a horse incapable of running away, and set a guard of fifteen or twenty arquebus-men over him. His people were given to others in charge; and the party started off with their prisoners, by different roads, through the forest. But Montaigne had not ridden three shots' distance when the chief came back to him with gentler words, stopped the troop, searched for his property, and restored it all to him, even his money-box. He could never quite understand the reason of this sudden change—for his enemies were of an opposite party, and he had boldly admitted his opinions. The chief, taking off his mask, told his name; and said the good countenance and firmness of language of Montaigne had influenced him: but it is probable that his reputation as author of the Essays may have had something to do with saving him.

However, he was set at liberty, and warned that further on he would be again attacked. But he escaped these other dangers with his life, although he appears to have been again robbed of his money, this time definitively—unless we suppose the return of his "box," mentioned in the Essays, to have been one of those little ornaments which we know he was sometimes fond of adding to his stories. However this may be, after many escapes he arrived penniless at Orleans, where he stopped, fearing to go further. A letter has recently been found, written by him from that city. I do not know to whom it was addressed, but it suggests that he afterwards exaggerated the magnanimity of his enemies :—

"Monseigneur,—You have heard that our baggage was taken in the forest of Villebois, in our sight; since then, after much circumlocution and scribbling, the act has been considered unjust by M. le Prince (de Conti?). We do not dare, however, to go further, on account of uncertainty as to the safety of our persons, of which we should be assured on our passports. The Liguers have done this thing, M. de Barraut and M. de la Rochefoucault: the tempest fell upon me, who had my money in my box. *I got back none of it*, and *most of my papers and things* remained in their hands. We did not see M. le Prince. M. de Thorigny has lost money, a silver spoon, and some things of little value. He has taken post, and turned aside from his road to see the mourning ladies at

Montresor, where still are the bodies of the two brothers and the grandmother, and joined us yesterday in this town, whence we are soon to depart. The journey to Normandy is put off. The King has sent MM. de Bellièvre and De la Guiche to Monsieur de Guise, to summon him to come to court: we shall be there on Thursday.

"From Orleans, this 16th of February, in the morning. Your very humble servant,

"MONTAIGNE."

It is useful to observe how the lofty, indifferent tone, with regard to worldly accidents, assumed in the Essays, disappears in these communications written on the spur of the moment.

CHAPTER XXV.

A PLEA FOR THE FLESH.

We have been obliged to follow Montaigne for some time so closely through the active scenes of life, that we have almost forgotten the valetudinarian speculator. During all this time, whither were his speculations tending? More and more towards doubt and uncertainty. Vanity of vanities—such was his estimation of the world. Having scoffed at Reason, he scoffs at Experience. Man was made to seek, but not to find knowledge. "There is no quality so universal, in this image of things, as diversity." He casts another rapid glance over the objects of all researches, and is astonished, more than ever, at their infinite variety. What hope was there of any definite conclusion? "Nothing but our weakness," he says, "leads us to be content with what others, or we ourselves, find in this *hunt after knowledge*. . . There is no end to our inquisitions: our end is in the other world. No generous mind stays at home: it pretends ever, and goes beyond its strength: it has impulses incommen-

surate with its effects: when it does not advance, hurry, retreat, struggle, and whirl, 'tis but half alive: its pursuits are without term and without form: its food is admiration, chace, ambiguity. . . What a swarm of commentators! how few authors! . . Our opinions are grafted one on the other; the first serves as a stalk for the second, the second for the third: we mount thus step by step, so that the highest has often more honour than merit, and is but raised an inch above the shoulders of the penultimate!"

"I have seen in Germany," he says further on, generalising from the experience of his travels, "that Luther has left as many divisions and altercations about the meaning of his works, ay, and more, than there exist about the meaning of the Holy Scriptures. Our contestation is verbal: I ask, what is Nature, Volupty, Circle, and Substitution? the question is in words and is answered in words. A stone is a body; but what is a body? A substance. And what is substance? So on to the end of the chapter. They exchange one word for another, often less known. I know better what a Man is than what is Animal, Mortal, or Reasonable. To appease one doubt they give me three."

These discussions, and others more directly bearing on practical life, annoyed Montaigne. The "hunt after knowledge" began to seem wearisome to him. "The wisest plan is to follow nature as simply as possible. Oh, what a soft and delicious pillow, and how healthy, are ignorance and incuriosity, for the

repose of a well-formed head!" This is the last result of Montaigne's philosophy.

Partly in a spirit of raillery against the magnificent doctors who "rode cockhorse on the epicycle of Mercury," and treated our body as a rag in their discourses, partly in the indulgence of a playful licentiousness which had nothing to do with his manners, Montaigne sat down one day to comment the famous Virgilian passage:—

> "Dixerat; et niveis hinc atque hinc diva lacertis
> Cunctantem amplexu molli fovet," κ. τ. λ.

The Essays would not have been complete without this extraordinary lucubration, which has raised the ire of monks and puritans ever since. How many must have thrilled with dangerous fear as they read—fear followed, we must suppose, by anger; for great is the number of copies found in public and private libraries with these hundred leaves or so torn out by some convulsive hand! One is disposed to imagine, at first, that this mutilation is the punishment of one or two coarse passages, and some few very daring Anacreontic notes here and there sounded. But such cannot be the case; for many as audacious flights are allowed to pass untouched elsewhere.

The truth is that Montaigne, having arrived at an age when he can no longer be suspected—especially considering the known gravity of his manners—of desiring to apologise for personal excesses, took plea-

sure, whilst indulging his wanton imaginations, in making one more assault on asceticism, which would convert this world into a hospital, filled with emaciated patients, lying racked on narrow beds, or wandering drearily about the wards in expectation of a discharge, instead of one vast source of delicious sensation. As usual, he went too far, did this moderate man. What horrified the anchorites or the hypocrites who expurgated him was the utter disregard of moral obligation which this Essay in certain parts affects, the utter forgetfulness that we are not so many animals placed here to devour so much pleasure and have done with existence. We must reflect, however, that Montaigne is travelling over that boundless region Man, and describing it province by province. The real charge is, that he lingered somewhat too long here.

After all, what does he say? Old age is coming on: he finds himself growing heavier and thicker every day. On all sides, lessons of patience and hints to prepare for death crowd. His mind is ever at work, and some of the functions of the body are ceasing. He is afraid the balance will be destroyed, so he ventures to say: "I defend myself from temperance as of yore I defended myself against volupty: it is drawing me too far back, even to stupidity. Now, I want to be master of myself in every respect: wisdom has its excesses, and is not less in need of moderation than madness. Therefore, for fear I should dry, shrivel up, and become ponderous by prudence, in the intervals which my sufferings grant me, I gently turn aside and

escape from the sight of that stormy and cloudy sky which spreads before me; which, thank God, I consider without affright, but not without application and study; and so I amuse myself with the memory of past youth."

This was the crime Montaigne committed: beyond the grave was "a stormy and cloudy sky," from which he sometimes averted his glance; and sent it back, trembling with emotion, towards his early days and early loves, which were not all pure and recommendable. He pretends that he did this purposely, "to escape by a trick the chagrin of old age. But, verily," he adds, "*other remedies than dreams* are required. Feeble is the struggle of art against nature. . . . My philosophy lies in action, for natural and present use, little in fantasy. . . . Oh, that I could take pleasure in playing at chuck-farthing, or with a top!" The ingenuity of pious indignation discovers in this passage a desire, in despite of Françoise, to renew the fond adventures of the court of Henry the Second. At worst he may be regretting his Italian peccadilloes.

"A sombre and stupid tranquillity suffices for me; but it lulls me to sleep, and makes my head heavy; and I am not quite content with it. If there be any persons, any good company in town or country, in France or elsewhere, stationary or wayfaring, to whom my humours seem good, they have but to whistle, and I will come and supply them with Essays in flesh and bone!" I wonder this appeal was not attended to by Pierre Van Veen, who appears to have been one of the

most ardent contemporary admirers of Montaigne. He was the brother of Otto the painter, and Gilbert the engraver; and himself studied the arts when a youth, and showed considerable talent. In his manuscript autobiographical sketch he says: "Residing in France, in my youth, at the age of twenty-four, and being in the service of the Seigneur de Fargis, Governor of the country of Maine, in the year 1589, the works of Montaigne fell into my hands. At that time I much esteemed them, principally because I had heard that Lipsius had ventured to call their author 'the French Thales.' Youth willingly clings to authority. In my adolescence I had heard the said Lipsius at Leyden, and held him to be one of the greatest personages of the day, and I was one of his clients. Therefore I could not cease from reading and re-reading these Essays; and now, in my riper years, I continue to admire them from my independent judgment." Pierre then goes on to describe how Montaigne's way of thinking was in conformity with his; and is thus led to narrate his own adventurous life, his search at Rome for his brother Gilbert, who had began his artistic travels at the age of fourteen, his experiences at the Estats de Blois, where he might have met Montaigne, and his subsequent course of life at Leyden. This curious document is appended to an edition of the Essays of 1602. The fly-leaves are covered with notes by another hand, *e.g.* "Mezeray called Montaigne the Christian Seneca;" and the margin contains not only illustrative anecdotes and remarks in Van Veen's own

hand, but a profusion of very clever pen-and-ink sketches suggested by the text. Here we see Thracians shooting at the heavens, gamblers exhibiting their fury, lovers fondling, drunkards reeling, and even Montaigne "playing with his cat." Our Essayist was so ardently hungering for a new friend, that we must blame Master Pierre Van Veen, who could wander whither he pleased, for not calling at the Castle, before returning to his native city and taking to the study of the law. With his ardent appreciation of the Essays he would have been more welcome than the most lovely visitation of beauty, whatever may have been Montaigne's affected yearnings: at his age, Archeanassa is always eclipsed by a disciple.

"Few people will object to the license of my writings," says Montaigne, "who ought not to have more to object to in the license of their thoughts: I agree with their courage, but offend their eyes. . . . At any rate, I have ordered myself to dare to say what I dare to do; and thoughts that cannot be published displease me. The worst of my actions and conditions does not seem to me so ugly as the cowardice of not daring to confess it. . . . . He who should undertake to tell all, would undertake to do nothing which would not bear telling. . . . . If it be indiscretion thus to publish one's errors, there is no great danger that it should pass into an example and custom; for Aristo used to say, that the winds men fear most are those that uncover them. Up with this stupid rag that hides our manners! I am weary of seeing my Essays used by ladies merely

as a common piece of furniture in their parlours: this chapter will introduce me to their private society." We expect great confessions; but, setting aside the vague sentimental reminiscences of early loves I have given, there is nothing to reward the curiosity of scandal-mongers, and nothing worthy the indignation of those who can tolerate Marguerite of Navarre.

The "Essay on Experience," the last published by Montaigne, is one of the most pregnant of all, and one of the most varied. Here we have some of the sharpest sayings by the side of some of the most familiar revelations. He runs over his whole life, and epitomises all his doctrines. Here we find a last fling at the doctors; a last glance of regret towards the Court—where he *might* have been of some use as a councillor;—a curious expression of fondness for warfare—"There is no occupation so pleasant as the military"—all manner of communications on the progress of his habits, his crotchets, his diseases,—and some more fond allusions to his loves in early life, few but steady.

"Sex me vix memini sustinuisse vices."

He does not, however, endeavour to make himself appear in any romantic light. "What an indecent fellow I am to eat so gluttonously as I do! I often bite my tongue, and sometimes my fingers, in my haste." It is useless to disguise it: Montaigne had become a *bon vivant*, and lived for the pleasures of the stomach as well as of the imagination. No matter.

Who does not wish he had given us some particulars of the three dinners he remembered with such delight as having occurred in his happy time? Everything in its place, he says: "Shall we seek the quadrature of the circle whilst we are kissing our wives? I hate to be ordered to have my soul in the clouds whilst my body is at table. I don't want the mind to be nailed down there, nor to wallow in the dishes; but I want it to apply itself to them—to sit before them, not lie in them."

In reality, the whole of this Essay is an apology for his moderate way of viewing things—very sensible and reasonable—but showing in its details somewhat too great a relish for material enjoyments. When he comes to state his doctrine, this "sickly Egotist," who has been described as weary of his existence—he sometimes pretends that he was—begins one of his concluding paragraphs thus: "For my part, then, I love life, and cultivate it, such as God has been pleased to grant it to us. I don't regret the necessity of eating and drinking, and should think myself wrong in desiring that necessity to be less." He regretted nothing, he goes on to say in somewhat too plain language, that gave pleasure. "It is ungrateful and iniquitous to complain of the desires and capacity of enjoyment given to our body. . . . We wrong the great Giver in refusing his gift, in annulling and disfiguring it." Nothing stronger was ever said against the exaggerations of Asceticism and Puritanism.

"They want to emerge from themselves, and

escape from Man! Madness. Instead of transforming themselves into angels, they transform themselves into beasts; instead of raising, they lower themselves. These transcendant humours frighten me, as do lofty and inaccessible peaks; and I find nothing difficult to digest in the life of Socrates but his ecstasies and demonries; nothing so human in Plato as that which makes him to be called divine." To the last he carries on his war with supernaturalism; and how much more openly than in the earlier Essays! It cannot be denied that, however humane his object, he was here tending to abase and vulgarise us. Not that his interference was altogether uncalled for in that age. But he should have thought that he wrote for all ages. Yet are there not still enthusiasts and bigots who require this check?

"We may mount upon stilts if we will, for on stilts we are still obliged to use our legs; and on the highest throne in the world we place what we place on the lowest stool. The finest lives, to my mind, are those which agree with the common and human model, with order, but without miracle, without extravagance. Now, old age has somewhat want of more tender treatment. Let us recommend it to the gay and social God who protects at once health and wisdom:—

> 'Frui paratis et valido mihi,
> Latoë, dones, et, precor, integrâ
> Cum mente; nec turpem senectam
> Degere, nec citharâ carentem.'"

Thus cheerfully do the Essays conclude. But, as I

have said, amidst all this, at times we see traces of profound melancholy and dissatisfaction. The journey to Italy seems to have improved Montaigne's health; his hereditary disease was less violent in its attacks. But other sources of personal discomfort were opened. The approaches of old age were now unmistakable. He thought he was old at forty; and in the midst of his full vigour began to prepare for death whilst enjoying life. When death really approached, though we see no traces of childish fear, he was evidently less prepared than he expected—less prepared than he would have been many years before. Some great yearning of his life remained unsatisfied. He had sought what he wanted by the road-side and in foreign lands; he had sought it at court, in the city, and at home amidst his family or his books. But he found it not. He was devoured by passion for the Unknown.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE STORY OF MARIE DE GOURNAY.

Perhaps Montaigne was made more inclined to complain, or, at any rate, to sink deeper into melancholy, by the idea that his labours were not duly appreciated. He had printed at Bordeaux, and found that no man was a prophet in his own country. He went to Paris, in order to appeal at once to a wider public. No doubt he exaggerated his disappointment; his book had sold well, but he had the weakness — if weakness it be — not to be content with the applause of unknown readers. He had announced in his Essays that one of his objects in publishing was to incite some congenial minds to offer themselves to his friendship. He scarcely expected the void left by La Boëtie to be filled up. But he wanted disciples, not to say admirers. He was approaching the term of his career, and this solace was still denied by fortune. The pedantic, patronising approval of such men as Pasquier, did not satisfy him. It was but fair, indeed, that the world should depute to him, as it were, a

representative of the class that was to honour and cherish him evermore. Otherwise, he who doubted so much might have died doubting his own value.

A messenger came to him one day in his lodgings at Paris, bearer of high-flown and enthusiastic compliments from a lady totally unknown to him, but whose name has since been inseparably united with his. Mademoiselle le Jars de Gournay was born in 1566, at Paris. She was the daughter of a respectable Picard gentleman in the king's service, and of Jeanne de Hacqueville. Her mother had several children, but was left early a widow. The family fell into comparative distress, and was compelled to leave Paris and return to its native Picardy. Here, at Gournay-sur-Aronde, near Compiègne, in somewhat penurious style, lived Jeanne with her children. Marie, the eldest, early showed a taste for learning; and, whilst her mother would have had her pay attention only to the accomplishments of a housewife, secretly mastered the Latin language, and almost succeeded in triumphing over the last difficulties of the Greek. From the latter, indeed, she translated the Life of Socrates by Laertius, to please a worthy neighbour desirous of knowing something about that Athenian gentleman, whose name recurred so often in the enthusiastic talk of the erudite.

Marie de Gournay was not yet twenty when the reputation of the Essays of Montaigne reached her. The edition of 1580 came into her hands. It decided her fate. She was his disciple from that day forward,

and yearned for nothing so much as to see the man who could write such wise words. A sort of passion, "a fatal sympathy," took possession of her.

For three years the mind of the poor girl was agitated by this feeling, and no opportunity presented itself for satisfying her desire. At length, in 1588, she happened to visit Paris with her mother. Montaigne, as we have seen, was there. No sooner had she heard this news, than she despatched the messenger I have mentioned to declare the esteem she felt for his person and his works.—We can imagine what emotions fluttered the bosom of the learned virgin whilst she waited for a reply.—Montaigne, above all men, was accessible to such attentions. He came himself on the morrow to thank her for her admiration—there is nothing that more excites our gratitude—and at once offered her the affection of an adoptive father. From that time forward she became his intellectual child, and no filial reverence ever surpassed hers.

Mademoiselle de Gournay was then twenty-two years of age; and, although wags have defended her virtue at the expense of her charms, must have been of agreeable personal appearance. She was of middling height, well made; as to complexion, a clear brunette; with an oval face set off with chestnut hair. Intellect gave character to a physiognomy in itself not strictly beautiful. It is necessary to insist on these circumstances, for we may be sure that not even adulation could have reconciled Montaigne to a very ugly disciple. He would as soon have had an ugly doctor.

Montaigne was so pleased with his new acquaintances, Marie and her mother, that after interchanging visits with them for some time at Paris, he accepted their invitation to repair to Gournay. Here he remained a long while in their house—three months in all, with the interval of a short journey back to Paris on business,—and enjoyed the delights of disinterested flattery. Marie de Gournay was at his feet. He could not resist the temptation to boast of this intellectual conquest; and when he returned to Paris added the following lines to his Essays, then going through the press: "I have taken pleasure in publishing in many places the hopes I entertain of Marie de Gournay le Jars, my daughter by adoption; and, certes, loved by me more than paternally, and enveloped by me in my retreat and my solitude as one of the best parts of my own being. I look to none else in the world but her. If adolescence can foretell anything with certainty, that mind will one day be capable of the finest things; and among others, of the perfection of that very sacred friendship to which we do not read that her sex has yet been able to ascend. The sincerity and solidity of her manners are already sufficient warrant of this. Her affection for me is more than superabundant; and in truth, is such, that there would be nothing to alloy it, if the apprehension of my death, on account of my being fifty-five years of age when she met me, did less cruelly disturb her. The judgment she formed about the first Essays, she being a woman, and in this age, and so young, and the only one who did so in her

neighbourhood; and the famous vehemence with which she loved me and desired me, merely on account of the esteem she formed for me, a long time before she saw me, are accidents very worthy of consideration."

Few, perhaps, will appreciate the triumphant delight of Marie de Gournay when she found herself fixed in the affections of Montaigne. To doubt for a moment the purity of their relations would be mere impertinence. Marie may have felt her young breast warm with an attachment which she did not quite understand; and we know that she never afterwards loved anything but letters, her maid Jasmyn, and her cat *Piaillon*. But this passion took the form of literary enthusiasm, and was sheltered under maternal care. Moreover, although Marie never visited the château of Montaigne during his lifetime, she went to mingle her grief with that of Françoise afterwards, and was not repulsed.

Whilst the Essayist was at Gournay, Marie composed or began a work which seems to have been the first effort of her pen. The idea was suggested in a manner which shows that in her conversations with Montaigne she sometimes trod on dangerous ground. They were walking together some evening when the sun had ceased to glance between the tall trees on the green plains of Picardy—he, no doubt, enjoying the devout admiration of this young girl; she, perhaps, thrilling with mysterious emotion; and they began to talk of the dangerous results that follow ill-regulated passion! Marie understood those dangers better than the philosopher, and the result of her meditations that

night was the "Pourmenoir de Montaigne." It is a sentimental romance, dealing with the adventures of Alonda the faithful and Leontin the faithless; and culminating to a terrible catastrophe — a projected murder and a double suicide. It seems to form a link between the chivalrous romances, so much in vogue towards the middle of the sixteenth century, and the sentimental narratives, in a sort of poetical prose, of the seventeenth. The book was published, with a dedication to Montaigne, in 1589. It achieved a great success; and although serious critics, not knowing the secret history of the young lady's heart, reproached her with choosing so amorous a subject, and dwelling at such length and with such elaborate minuteness on the miseries of unrequited passion, the public generally were pleased. With reason; for the "Pourmenoir" is no contemptible production; and Montaigne's prophecy concerning the talents of his *protégée* was already in part accomplished. I should add, that the title of *fille d'alliance* was formally bestowed on her, and she ever afterwards used it, being "no less proud of it," she says, "than if she had been mother of the Muses themselves!" This "second father" aided in the development of her mind; and by verbal counsels at Paris and Gournay, and no doubt by correspondence afterwards, enabled her to wield her pen with more confidence. Some old château of Picardy may still contain letters addressed by the Essayist to his accomplished adopted daughter.

He at length, however, found it necessary to return

to Paris definitively. The parting must have been a pathetic one. We can imagine the passionate grief of Marie. Perhaps in some unguarded moment she confessed her most intimate feelings, and vowed eternal maidenhood in honour of her adored master. At any rate, there is a very singular passage in the Essays. It begins in an absurd manner, unless we suppose, as I do, that Montaigne wished first to conceal the part of France where the incident he mentions happened, and then, from inadvertence or vanity, admitted it for the benefit of keen posterity. "When I *came from* those famous Estates of Blois, I *had seen* a little while before in Picardy a young girl, who, to testify the ardour of her promises and also her constancy (or courage), drew out a bodkin she wore in her hair and gave herself four or five good stabs in her arms, which made her skin crack in good earnest." Was it likely that Montaigne could have been present at such a scene between two strangers?

CHAPTER XXVII.

IMPRISONMENT IN THE BASTILLE AND RESIDENCE AT BLOIS.

When Montaigne returned to Paris he went to lodge in the Faubourg St. Germain, whence no doubt he made constant journeys to the printing-office of Abel l'Angelier, where his Essays were going through the press. I have not thought it necessary to say anything about his relations with the Court at this period, because there are absolutely no facts known. He was still "gentleman in ordinary," and, of course, did his duty occasionally as long as the Court was at Paris. He alludes frequently with contempt to the absurd conduct of Henry the Third and his penitential processions through the streets.

Montaigne's friend, De Thou, was at that time at Paris, and gives an animated account of its condition. All was excitement and agitation. The Ligue had at length assumed a menacing aspect. The King temporised, and gave time for the Duke of Guise to arrive. Then the sedition began. De Thou went on foot to

the Louvre, accompanied by two or three persons unarmed, but known. Silence reigned everywhere: the solitude was frightful; and alarm, which had reached the cabinet of the king, suggesting a new plan every moment, prevented any plan at all from being adopted. De Thou next hastened to the Hôtel de Guise, guarded by soldiers and surrounded by people; and saw the chief of the day with a countenance of wonderful serenity, which showed how sure he was of success. Then the historian endeavoured to return home, but found the principal streets embarrassed with barrels (*barriques*, whence barricades), which were being rolled into them from various directions. Every bell in Paris was ringing the tocsin. The king soon afterwards fled, never to return.

Montaigne, who had always been in the Duke of Guise's good graces, feared nothing, and remained in Paris, or returned thither, although well known to belong to the royal party. He even occasionally paid a visit to the Court at Chartres and Rouen, despite the hostility between it and the governors of Paris. His confidence, however, was too great. Returning once from Rouen, he was seized with an attack of gout, which kept him three days in bed. Between three and four in the afternoon of July 10th, a crowd came before his house, and, as he relates, he was made prisoner "by the captains and the people of Paris," and instantly taken away on his own horse and lodged in the Bastille. When he came to inquire the reason of this violence, he found that the Duke of Elbeuf had incited it by

way of reprisals for the arrest of one of his relatives, a Norman gentleman and Liguer, whom the king held prisoner at Rouen. It happened fortunately, however, that the report of what had taken place reached the Queen-mother whilst she was at the Council with the Duke of Guise. M. Pinard, Secretary of State, came and told her. She instantly begged the Duke to intercede, and sent a message herself to the Provost of the Merchants. M. de Villeroy, another Secretary of State, also gave his assistance. Consequently, about eight o'clock in the evening, a maître d'hôtel of Catherine de Medici came to the Bastille, bearing a written order of release from the Duke of Guise and the Provost; and so, by "an unheard-of favour," he obtained his liberty from "the first prison he had ever known." The boast in the Essays that he had never seen the inside of a prison was not, however, erased after this. I have already remarked, that the intercession of the Queen-mother proves the high esteem in which Montaigne was held by her and the Court generally.

Having escaped from the Bastille, the Essayist seems to have hastened his departure from Paris, and to have joined the Court in its wanderings from Rouen to Blois. Here we find him again in company with De Thou, who calls him his "particular friend," and says that he was pressed by him very much to think seriously of the embassy to Venice, which was offered to him. Montaigne himself was meditating another

journey to Venice, and promised to stay there during all the residence of De Thou.

They talked of the causes of the troubles, and Montaigne said that formerly he had acted as mediator between the King of Navarre and the Duke of Guise, when those princes were at Court; that the latter had made all manner of advances to gain the friendship of Navarre, but having discovered that he was played with, and that, despite all he had done, the other remained his implacable enemy, he had recourse to war as the last resource to defend the honour of his house. If this report be true, we must necessarily suppose that personally Montaigne leaned rather towards the Duke than towards Henry, whose duplicity he admitted; whilst politically he preferred the triumph of the latter. He went on to say, that the private enmity of these two men was the origin of the war which was then waging; that only the death of one or the other could bring it to an end; that neither the Duke nor any of his house would believe in safety as long as the King of Navarre lived; and that the said Duke, for his part, was persuaded that he could never assert his right to the crown during the lifetime of the Duke.

"As for religion," Montaigne added, "which both put forward, 'tis a fine pretext to get followers; but religion touches neither one nor the other — nothing but the fear of being abandoned by the Protestants prevents the King of Navarre from returning to the religion of his forefathers; and the Duke would have not much

repugnance to the Confession of Augsburg, which was recommended to him by his uncle the Cardinal de Lorraine, if he could follow it without prejudicing his interests. Such are the sentiments which I have perceived in these princes, when I have had to do with their affairs."

These observations prove that few better than Montaigne understood the characters of the personages towards whose acts all attention was then directed. He came to Blois with a kind of presentiment of what was going to happen. Some have tried to make him out to have been a Deputy to the *Etats;* but it is certain that he was there as a mere observer and courtier. "It must have been a curious spectacle for him," says a biographer, "to behold that close game in which the destinies of France were the stake. What a study for the scrutinising eye of the moralist and the politician must have been the movement of all the passions which agitated the Court and the Ligue! With what interest must Montaigne have watched the audacity of the Duke of Guise at the Barricades, his weakness after victory, the resentment of the king in his flight, the efforts of his government to regain lost ground, the dissimulation employed better to ensure vengeance, and finally, the solemn stage erected at Blois, whereon to strike the decisive blow!

The assembly of the Three Estates at Blois did not open until November. As we have no reason to suppose that Montaigne was present, except as a spectator, I shall not allude further to this remarkable

historical event. We have, however, the account of a conversation with Pasquier, which I shall give in the words of his interlocutor, merely omitting the examples of faulty French adduced :—"We were walking," says the self-admiring lawyer, "in the court of the château; and I happened to say to him that he had forgotten himself in not communicating his work to some of his friends before publishing it; because there were observable, in many places, certain traces of the Gascon dialect, which might have been pointed out to him. As he would not believe me, I took him to my room, where I had his book, and therein I showed him many forms of speech not familiar to the French but only to the Gascons. Above all, I pointed out to him his improper use of the word *jouir;* with several other mistakes. And I thought that at the next edition of his book he would order these corrections to be made. Nevertheless, not only did he not do so, but also, as if he foresaw his death, he prepared it for the press carefully, just as it was. And his daughter by alliance, in her preliminary preface, announces that the lady of Montaigne gave it her exactly as her husband had wished it to be printed. I will add to this, that although he pretends to disdain himself, I never read an author who esteemed himself so much as he; for if you were to erase all the passages he employs in speaking of himself, and of his family, his work would be reduced by a quarter, good measure, especially in his third book, which seems to be a history of his manners and actions—a thing which I attribute some-

what to the freedom of the old age at which he composed it!"

No wonder that Montaigne neither cared for the praises, nor noticed the criticisms of such a Pundit as this! Erase all the passages in which he speaks of himself! Verily, the age was passing by, and not understanding the Essays. I need not proceed and copy the laudations by which Pasquier endeavours to destroy the idea that he was a "professed enemy" of Montaigne; but we may be quite sure he remained a little annoyed at the neglect of his advice. Some touches are good, however; as for example: "He was a bold personage, who believed in himself, and as such, allowed himself to be carried away by the beauty of his mind: so that, in his writings, he took pleasure in displeasing pleasantly." It is curious to find Estienne Pasquier's son, Nicolas, afterwards defending the purity of his father's French against a Jesuit critic, in the following manner: "You blame the use of certain words: read Montaigne, Du Vair, Charron, Calvin, who all spoke good French, and you will see that they use those words in the same way as he."

It is the belief of every biographer that Montaigne remained at Blois until after the assassination of the Duke of Guise. This event is recorded in his Journal as follows: "December 23, 1588.—Henry, Duke of Guise, in truth one of the first men of his age, was killed in the king's chamber."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CHARRON.

However, in February, 1589, Montaigne returned to his château, where he was present, on the 27th, at the marriage in his own chapel of M. de Belcier, Seigneur de Bonaquet, with Mademoiselle de Sallebeuf. The Essayist had affianced them two days before, in the presence of Messieurs de Mothegondrin, father and son, de Monreal, de Blancastel, and others. On July 16, another marriage took place in the chapel between a Captain Rous and Mademoiselle de Sersines. This captain formed part of the suite of Henry of Navarre when that monarch visited the château, and is mentioned in one of Montaigne's letters: "I am seeking a certain Captain Rous," he says.

There is another entry worth quoting from Montaigne's meagre journal:—

"*April* 4, 1589.—Died at the château of Turenne, the Baron de Savignac, from the effects of an arquebus shot in the head, which he had received four days before at the siege of the house of Du Pechie. He was my

relative and friend, and singularly familiar in my family; his sister was brought up by my wife."

According to Mademoiselle de Gournay, it would appear that some of Montaigne's projected expeditions —as, for example, his visit to Venice— were prevented by political reasons. "When he returned to Guienne," she says, "the war of the Ligue, which then raged over all France, tied him there by the command and for the service of the king." It is not surprising that so wise a head on the shoulders of a man of landed property should have been considered a useful addition to the royal party in Guienne. But we do not know that Montaigne, during the remainder of the reign of Henry the Third, was engaged in any very important transactions. After remaining some time in his château he went to Bordeaux, to assist his successor, the Maréchal de Matignon, mayor, with his advice. His absence from home is known, partly from the report of Schomberg, an envoy from the king to Germany — compelled to go round by way of Guienne to find safe roads—who having visited the battlefield of Coutras, stopped at Montaigne. "The owner was then at Bordeaux," says the narrator; "but his wife, (sister of Pressac, who accompanied Schomberg,) received them very politely."

Montaigne, however, never very anxious to display zeal in public matters, was kept at Bordeaux for a reason similar to that which attracted him to Gournay. In the year 1586 there visited him at his château an Abbé named Charron, who was gaining considerable reputation as a preacher. The national library

of Paris possesses a copy of a work, entitled "*Il Catechismo, overa Institutione Christiana, di M. Bernardino Ochino, da Siena, in forma di Dialogo: in Basilea,* 1561." On the title-page is Montaigne's signature, with the words, "a prohibited book;" and a little below the following words, written by Charron: "The gift to me of the said lord of Montaigne, in his castle, July 2, 1586." But the great intimacy of the gentleman-philosopher and the philosophical-theologian did not begin until the year 1589. Then Charron, having preached all through Lent at Angers, came to Bordeaux, where he "formed a friendship and lived very familiarly with Montaigne."

The relations of these two men were very peculiar. Some seem to believe that Charron received from Montaigne a confession of his esoteric doctrines, and stated plainly in his solemn didactic works what his master merely insinuated in his Essays. If this was the case I do not understand the Essays, which, despite a little piece of disingenuity here, a bold statement provoked by timidity there, some few palpable hesitations, appear to me on the whole "a book of good faith," as they claim to be. Montaigne was not the man to load a blunderbuss against Christianity, and leave half-a-crown to a beggarly Scotchman to fire it off after his death. He had no consistent, obstinate theory on matters philosophical. The dogged materialist, who pretends to be a sceptic, who is sure and pretends to doubt—because the world is sick of the insolent paradox it once received with wondering favour—is a

production of modern times. Montaigne treated spiritualism as a jealous lover might his mistress. He yearned towards it and sought it, but found it surrounded with so many equivocal circumstances and companions that he turned away, and endeavoured to immerse himself in matter; but was never able to forget. The conflict within him was a serious conflict, from which he came out scathed and suffering. The positive philosophers, who are now so certain on matters which touched him so near, point to his doubts and hesitations as evidences of weakness,—as if any one was exempt from doubt save fools and martyrs.

I shall not here, near the last limits of this study, endeavour to develope the doctrines of Charron. Their tendency is more material far than the desultory speculations of Montaigne. We find neither his passion nor his high spiritual flights; but we find his common sense, his pure morality, and especially his language, deprived somewhat of its gay step and brilliant ornaments. Charron *was* Montaigne's disciple, but could only receive a portion of his teaching. This depended on the construction of his mind, and on its narrower capacity; also on the absence of that amiable, though somewhat cautious, sympathy with mankind, which is our Essayist's chief characteristic.

Montaigne returned two or three times to his château during the year 1589, but hastened back to enjoy the conversation and respect of Charron. He had now found two minds which to a considerable extent understood and appreciated him — Charron and

Marie; and the declining years of his life were much cheered. He set to work with extreme diligence to polish and improve his Essays from beginning to end, but especially to add new observations, anecdotes, and illustrations, which largely increased the bulk of his work.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MONTAIGNE'S RELATIONS WITH HENRY THE FOURTH.

HENRY THE THIRD was murdered by Jacques Clément, in July 1589; and from that time forward Montaigne considered Henry the Fourth as his lawful king. He had given up all connexion with the Ligue as soon as that body became disloyal. The state of things which he now saw to be possible was that which he thought to be best,—Catholicism, the religion of the State; Protestantism living unmolested under the guardianship of the laws. He would have drawn up the Edict of Nantes.

But Montaigne did not wait for the victory of Henry to communicate with him, and assure him of his support. He wrote a letter of allegiance at once, and received an answer from the king's secretary on the 30th of November, making an appointment to meet him at Tours. The rejoinder was not sent until the next year, on the plea of a delay on the part of the royal courier or secretary. Probably, Montaigne had no desire to leave his comfortable château in quest of

new adventures, and quietly let the appointed time pass by. It is unnecessary for me to sketch the political state of France in the beginning of 1590. The Valois branch had been extinct six months, and Henry the Fourth was fighting for his crown with the Ligue. Montaigne was at his château; and, remembering that an answer to the king was due, sat down and wrote, with more care than usual, an epistle which is too characteristic of his character and position to be omitted:—

"Sire,—You place yourself above the weight and the crowd of your affairs, by knowing how to value and attend to the little ones in their turn, according to the duty of your royal authority, which exposes you, at all hours, to all sorts and degrees of men and occupations. However, that your Majesty has deigned to consider my letters, and command them to be answered, I would rather attribute to the benignity than to the vigour of your mind. I have always foreseen whither fortune would carry you; and you may remember that, even when I felt bound to confess it as a sin to my curé, I could not help looking on your successes with pleasure. Now, with more reason and liberty, I embrace them with a full affection. They serve you where you are by their positive results; but they do not serve us less here by reputation: the report travels as far as the blow. We cannot derive arguments so strong to restrain and reduce your subjects, from the justice of your cause, as from the news of the prosperity of your

enterprises; and I can assure your Majesty, that the new changes which we see about here to your advantage have been much assisted by your happy issue from Dieppe, seconded by the honest zeal and marvellous prudence of M. le Maréchal de Matignon; from whom I persuade myself that you do not receive daily so many good and remarkable services without remembering my assurances and hopes. I expect from the coming summer, not so much the ripening of the fruits of the earth, as of those of our common tranquillity; and trust it will pass over our affairs with the same even tenor of happiness, dissipating, as have the preceding ones, so many great promises with which your adversaries have fed the good-will of their men. The inclinations of the people always flow in masses: if the current once sets in in your favour, it will go on, by its own impetus, to the end. I should have desired that the private gain of the soldiers of your army, and the necessity of satisfying them, had not deprived you, especially in the case of that important city, of the fine recommendation of having treated, in the midst of victory, your rebellious subjects with more kindness than their own protectors; and that, setting aside a passing and usurped credit, you had shown that they were yours, by a paternal and truly royal protection. In conducting such affairs as those which you have in hand, not common ways must be used: it has always been seen that they have been conquered by their greatness and their difficulty. Arms and force

being found wanting, they have been made perfect by clemency and magnificence—excellent baits to draw men, especially towards the just and lawful party. If rigour and chastisement be necessary, it should be postponed until after victory. A great conqueror of the past times boasted that he gave his enemies as much reason to love him as his friends. And here we feel already some effect of the good prognostic of the impression received by our disobedient cities, by the comparison of their rough treatment with that of those under your command. Hoping for your Majesty a felicity more pleasant and less hazardous, in that you may rather be beloved than feared by your people—uniting your interests with theirs—I rejoice that the same steps which you make towards victory are steps towards easier conditions of peace.

"Sire, your letter of the last of November has only just reached me; and the time is now passed when you prescribe a meeting during your stay at Tours. I take it as a singular favour that you have deigned to express a wish to see a person so useless, but your own, more by affection still than duty. You have very praiseworthily adapted your external manners to the height of your new fortune; but the *débonnaireté* and facility of your internal humours, you are as praiseworthy not to change. You have been pleased to consider not only my age, but my desire also, in inviting me to a place where you will be somewhat at rest from your laborious occupations. But will not

Paris, Sire, soon be that place? No endeavour of mine shall be spared to meet you there.

"Your very humble, and very obedient
Servant and Subject,
"MONTAIGNE.

"*At Montaigne, Jan.* 1, 1590."

There are some Machiavellian pieces of advice in this letter,—as, to use clemency as a bait, and to punish after victory—which we may suppose to have been adapted purposely to the duplicit character of the chivalrous king. Montaigne knew that Henry, inclined from indolence to be merciful at most times, would relish the good actions proposed to him much better if they had a savour of deceit and dissimulation about them.

Montaigne was still, we see, ready to seize any opportunity of visiting his beloved Paris; but his slight experience of the Bastille prevented him from thinking of indulging the desire until the defeat of the Ligue, which was then triumphant. One of the things he had looked forward to with pleasure was to see the opening of the Pont Neuf. "Fortune has done me a great displeasure," he says, "in interrupting the fine structure of the new bridge of our great city, and taking from me the hope, before dying, of seeing it in use."

Later in the same year, Henry the Fourth wrote to Montaigne requesting him to do something for his service—apparently to influence or encourage Ma-

tignon,—and afterwards to come to Paris; and, it would seem, apologising for not adequately rewarding him and offering him money for his expenses. The philosopher sturdily replied:—

"Sire,—The letter which it pleased your Majesty to write to me on the twentieth of July, was only given to me this morning, and found me suffering from a very violent tertian fever, common in this country since a month. Sire, it is a great honour to me to receive your commands, and I have not failed to write to M. le Maréchal de Matignon three times, very expressly stating my resolve, and the obligation I was under, to go and meet him. I even set down the road which I should take to go to him secretly, if he thought fit. But I have received no answer, and I suppose he has considered for me the length and danger of the roads. I trust your Majesty will be pleased to favour me by believing that I shall never complain of my purse in a cause in which I should not hesitate to risk my life. I have never received anything from the liberality of kings—nor have I asked nor deserved any present—and have received no payment for the steps I have taken in their service, of which your Majesty is partly aware. What I have done for your predecessors I will do still more willingly for you. I am, Sire, as rich as I wish to be. When I have emptied my purse in the service of your Majesty at Paris, I will be bold enough to say so; and then, if you think me worthy to be kept any longer in your suite, you will

find me a cheaper bargain than the least of your officers.

"I am, &c.

"MONTAIGNE."

The Essayist never performed his promised journey, and never enjoyed the pleasure, for which he so much yearned, of seeing Paris once more as he had seen it in his youth,—at peace, peopled by a brilliant court, the resort of learning and genius, which, if not too rudely repelled, are always ready to associate with splendour, luxury, and dissipation. Henry the Fourth did not purchase his capital with a Mass until subsequently to Montaigne's death.

After writing the above letter, indeed, Montaigne lived only two years, during which we have little information as to his movements. He appears to have spent his time chiefly at his château, but occasionally went to Bordeaux. In 1591 his daughter, Léonore de la Tour, had a daughter, who seems to have been born at la Tour. If so, Montaigne and his wife went there to the christening.

CHAPTER XXX.

DEATH OF MONTAIGNE.

THIS is all we know of the last years of the Essayist's life, and we feel that no very important fact is left in the background. No doubt he was interested in the fortunes of the Bourbon branch of the royal house of France, because they were bound up with the interests of that mitigated toleration in favour of which he had written and laboured. With reason he could claim some share in the triumph of moderate ideas. Words like his leave traces where they pass; and if we examine the writings, the orations, the sayings, the general tone of society under Henry the Fourth, we shall be convinced that the Essays had become the habitual intellectual food of the best minds. There were more violent doctrines abroad, preached sometimes by sterner and more virtuous men than Montaigne—men formed and developed in the fiery furnace of civil war and persecution, who made the mistake of seeking to prolong a struggle which had come to a natural end from sheer weariness on either side. When a violent quarrel is over, candid views, reasonable sentiments, tendencies to compromise, generally make their appearance. France learned to think and speak in this strain, in great part, from the Essays.

But Montaigne, despite his yearnings towards Paris, felt that his career was drawing to a close, and determined to spend the remainder of his time as easily as possible. Occasionally he went and tarried a month or so, perhaps during winter, in that quaint, quiet, snug little house at Bordeaux, which he had inherited from the thrifty and steady Pierre Eyquem;

MONTAIGNE'S HOUSE AT BORDEAUX.

but more frequently he remained at his château, making the last corrections in his Essays. He seems to have concluded his work in a way satisfactory to himself, and was ready to print a final edition, when, in September 1592, he was suddenly seized at Montaigne with a quinsey, which from the first threatened to be fatal. He had no La Boëtie near him to record the minute incidents of this crowning act of his existence. We know, however, one or two facts. For three whole days he lay perfectly conscious, but unable to utter a word. He was compelled to have recourse to the pen to express his wishes. The proper arrangement of his worldly affairs occupied him a good deal. He had already made his will; and one day he got up in his shirt, put on his morning gown, opened his cabinet, sent for all his valets and others to whom he had left legacies, and paid them in ready cash, "foreseeing the difficulties which his heirs would raise." At last, feeling his end approach, he begged his wife on a slip of paper to send for certain gentlemen, his neighbours, that he might say farewell to them. When they had arrived—just as the priest was elevating the host—"this poor gentleman," says Pasquier, "leaped forward as well as he was able on his bed, with his hands clasped; and in this last act gave up his soul to God:—which was a fine mirror of the interior of his mind." It is worth adding, that when Charron suddenly died in the streets, he performed a similar act of adoration. The exact date of Montaigne's departure from this life was the 13th of September; and

his exact age was fifty-nine years, six months, and three days. He was buried at first at Montaigne, but his ashes were afterwards removed to the chapel of the Feuillans at Bordeaux, where they still remain. When I went to see the tomb, still in excellent preservation, with the effigies and inscription intact, that quarter of the city was filled with pestilence, and none not impelled by necessity would visit it. The narrow streets and irregular places were thronged with the heedless or pious poor; but the College, which occupies the Convent of the Feuillans, was left without a single pupil—all having fled. I could not help approving the prudence of Montaigne for holding aloof from such a dismal quarter. To see the monument you must pass under a street through a gloomy tunnel leading to the chapel. A hurried glance satisfied me. What need is there to describe a tomb, or copy its pompous language?

I have already mentioned the marriage of Léonore, Montaigne's only daughter, her departure with her husband, and the birth of her child. That she was "a very virtuous lady," as Pasquier says, there can be no doubt; but from the suppressed complaints of Montaigne in his Essays, we must suppose he was not quite satisfied with her. He once wished for a son-in-law to aid him in managing his estate; but M. de la Tour does not seem to have given him any assistance. The reader will not, therefore, follow the fortunes of Léonore with much interest. She became a widow after some years; and in 1608 again married "at Montaigne,

Charles de Gamaches, Vicomte de Raimont." Her daughter by her first husband was affianced in 1600, being only nine years of age, to a Dusa, and afterwards died in childbirth, leaving a son, killed in 1639 at the siege of Salse, without leaving any posterity. But in 1610, Léonore de Gamaches had another daughter, Marie, "held over the font," as she notes herself, "by her grandmother, Madame de Montaigne." Léonore died in 1616; but Marie de Gamaches lived until 1683, and left three daughters, the youngest of which she made her heir. This last, Claude Magdeleine de Lur-Saluce, was married to M. Isaac de Segur, and her descendants were lords of Montaigne up to the beginning of the present century. I think it unnecessary to trace the vicissitudes of the property, and shall only say that, as has been ingenuously remarked, "the heritage of this hater of law-proceedings gave rise to disputes which lasted more than a century."

As I have had occasion to mention, Antoinette de Louppes, wife of Pierre Eyquem, actually survived her son nine years. Françoise de la Chassagne, on the other hand, survived her daughter Léonore eleven years, and died only in 1627. She seems to have been a good, amiable woman, who, though not capable of appreciating all the value of Montaigne, did her best to do honour to his memory. How different from Léonore, whose husband was the chief heir to the property! The first thing she did was to give away all his books, leaving not a single one at the château. Forty years afterwards this library was sold publicly;

and a copy of the "History of the Kings of Poland" exists with the following note inserted: "Bought at Bordeaux from the library of the late Michel de Montaigne, author of the Essays, June 3, 1633." As might have been expected, many, perhaps most, of the books have been dispersed and lost; but several dozen volumes have from time to time appeared, not only with Montaigne's signature on the title-page, but with manuscript notes by him, and even in one or two cases the elaborate judgments which he used sometimes to insert at the end when he had finished reading.

Montaigne would not leave to his daughter Léonore the right to wear his arms, but transferred that right to his faithful friend and disciple Charron. On the other hand—and this is a striking instance of how firm, though short, was the friendship between these two men—when Charron died he bequeathed all his property, with the exception of a few legacies, to the sister and brother-in-law of Montaigne,—M. and Madame de Camein.

Meanwhile, Mademoiselle de Gournay had been left an orphan in 1591, at the age of twenty-five. She inherited a very small fortune—some two thousand francs a-year—with which she came to reside in Paris, determined to devote herself to learned pursuits. Her best solace in her loneliness was correspondence with Montaigne. That correspondence suddenly ceased; and then a letter arrived from Françoise de la Chassagne, containing an account of Montaigne's death, and it would appear an urgent request, in compliance with

his last wishes, that Marie should take charge of his literary reputation. He had forgotten to leave his books to her; and all his property was eagerly seized by his heirs. But he had pointed out to the good Françoise two copies of the quarto edition of the Essays, 1588, most elaborately prepared for the press, almost exact reproductions one of the other, and with about one-third additional matter on the margin. These he had told her to submit to Marie, the only person he knew in whose literary judgment and devotion to his memory he could confide. Pasquier would have erased his Gascon phrases, and polished his periods!

As soon as Marie received this letter, she abandoned all her business and occupation in Paris; and though war raged over the country, and soldiers and marauders infested the roads, resolutely journeyed alone nearly across the whole of France to Montaigne. Here she found Françoise and Léonore. She was received most hospitably, and appears to have formed an attachment at once for "her sister by alliance," Léonore, whom she represents as somewhat touched by love of the Muses. But Marie was ready to be charmed with anything that belonged to Montaigne. When the first moments of grief had passed, she at once set about her duties as literary executrix. For fifteen months she remained at Montaigne, examining the materials left for the final edition of the Essays, translating the classical quotations, writing notes, preparing prefaces. Who can refuse to love

this delightful young woman engaged in such a work? Her enthusiam is contagious. The Essayist rises in our estimation when we see him the object of such posthumous worship. "Montaigne wrote this book; Apollo conceived it!" Such is the learned devise which Marie selected to be engraved on the frontispiece of her edition.

Françoise de la Chassaigne, who, as I have said, if she did not relish the Essays, understood that her husband was a great man, and was resolved to do her best for his memory, gave one of the revised copies of the Essays to Marie, and deposited the other in the library of the Community of the Feuillans at Bordeaux. The latter remained unnoticed until the last century, when Anisson Duperron endeavoured in vain to obtain it from the monks, who would not part with it on any account. At the time of the Revolution it became the property of the city of Bordeaux, and still exists in the public library, where it has often been consulted with profit.

The copy given to Marie de Gournay, though it can be traced long after it left her possession, has now disappeared; but it was probably reproduced exactly in her edition. We may feel quite sure that she never wilfully altered a word or a letter that Montaigne had written. Immediately on returning to Paris she began to print a folio edition, which was not, however, ready until 1595. We do not know who defrayed the expenses, but it seems probable that the enthusiastic girl made the venture herself.

Marie de Gournay lived to be old, and, consequently, ridiculous. The wits and the débauchés of another age, neither understanding her nor Montaigne, satirised her, slandered her, and played off practical jokes upon her. She made the mistakes of remaining simple and virtuous, of living with a humble friend as a servant, and of having a cat. Consequently, she was fit to be a butt. I have not now the heart to follow her through her whole career, not merely because she was often miserable and sometimes ill-used; but because, whatever may have been her talents, they were a little out of season and unsuccessful. She failed in her ardent pursuit of a literary reputation, although no one now denies that she in some respects deserved a better fate.

But she retains an undeniable claim on the gratitude of posterity. For more than half a century she fought for the reputation of Montaigne, and did much to establish it. One fervent disciple is worth ten thousand advertisements. Marie made the Essays known, and defended them against all attacks. Almost towards the middle of the next century, when any one ventured to criticise this work of another age, the indefatigable old maid was ready to come forward and say that she had seen and conversed with Montaigne, and, despite all changes in taste, considered him the greatest man France had produced, and to announce that she was ready to defend his reputation at the peril of any hostile critic.

In 1635, forty years after the appearance of her first edition, Marie de Gournay brought out another

in a magnificent style, dedicated to the Cardinal de Richelieu, who deserves more credit than has been given him for the protection he afforded to Montaigne's daughter by adoption. This was the twenty-fifth reproduction of the Essays, but most of the others had been pirated by the printers of Lyons and Paris, and were often full of gross errors. Mademoiselle de Gournay had been granted the exclusive right to print Montaigne in 1633, and by disposing of it to the publisher Camuset she recovered some of the money she had spent. I think this is all that it is necessary for me now to say. I have endeavoured to describe the career of Montaigne from beginning to end, not in an antiquarian or bibliographical spirit; but in such a way as to throw light on the Essays, and prepare the student better to relish them.

NOTE

ON THE

MATERIALS FOR THE LIFE OF MONTAIGNE.

In these volumes I have not thought it advisable to encumber the foot of the page with notes and references. To have done so would have been to increase their bulk beyond all measure. I believe I may say I have neglected no source of information, and that all facts bearing directly or indirectly on the life of Montaigne have been, if not used, at any rate examined by me.

The Essays are, and must remain, the chief authority. But as they are not professedly autobiographical, great caution is required in their use. I have endeavoured to steer clear of an error into which all, or nearly all, biographers and critics of Montaigne have fallen—the error, namely, of accepting his testimony implicitly with respect to his own moral and intellectual qualities, as well as with respect to matters of fact. To modify such testimony, however, requires so accurate a knowledge of human nature, that I dare

not venture to hope I have been always just. But it is more glorious to fail in discovering how many scruples of self-love entered into every ounce of Montaigne's statements, than to cite with unerring accuracy the Essay and the Book in which he informs us that he was "an enemy to falsehood" and "a hater of calumny." The Charybdis of this Scylla is the temptation to appear profound, by suggesting bad instead of mixed and moderate motives; but self-love has preserved me from the belief that mankind is a rascal. Besides, I admit that I have a personal affection for Montaigne, so that after all I may have erred on the side of tenderness and credulity.

But I have even ventured sometimes to dispute the Essayist's statements of fact, and have endeavoured to maintain my views, either by extraneous testimony or by comparing passages which had not hitherto been placed side by side. In less important cases I have not given the process of reasoning by which I have re-established what appears to me to be the truth. But I have always written with perfect recollection that there is a body of men in France who absolutely call themselves "Montaignologues," who have erected the study of their hero into a scientific pursuit, and who will have no mercy on any blunder or any false inference. I fearlessly challenge their criticism, because, although they may point out some errors—and so earn my gratitude—I am persuaded that this book, in the main, is solidly built as far as matter of fact goes. In England, no doubt, there are also many who have

made Montaigne the study of half their lives, and on their ear any false note will grate. I may add, that if I had adopted the discussional tone, quoted documents, drawn elaborate inferences, piled up ingenious doubts in order to overthrow them by irrefragable testimony—published my notes, in fact—I might have produced half-a-dozen volumes and been sure of the approval of a dozen erudites, and of the deserved neglect of the English public. Mere references would have been unintelligible and bewildering without argument.

Neither in French nor English does there exist, properly speaking, a Life of Montaigne. Dr. Payen has pronounced that it is as yet impossible to write one; and will, perhaps, think my attempt bold. But he undervalues his own labours. What he has discovered, with what he has provoked others to discover, seems to me sufficient. There is a limit at which curiosity ceases, even about the greatest men, except with enthusiasts. In 1845 I was writing this Biography of Montaigne, and published the first chapter in "Fraser's Magazine." But the materials existing were then meagre indeed. In 1846 Dr. Payen brought out his first pamphlet, "*Documens Inédits ou peu Connus sur Montaigne;*" and since that time scarcely a year has passed that he has not succeeded in disinterring new materials. His enlightened industry has been emulated by MM. Gustave Brunet, Viel-Castel, Jubinal, and many others; and especially by M. Grün, who has brought out a really

valuable series of researches on what he calls "The Public Life" of Montaigne. I have also found much useful matter in several little works by M. Léon Feugère, the editor of La Boëtie. Indeed, the number of studies on the literary heroes of the sixteenth century in France is very great; and if many exhibit a remarkable absence of critical power, and a tendency to tread beaten tracks and repeat old errors, they can all be consulted with profit.

MM. Guizot, Villemain, Sainte-Beuve, and Philarète Chasles, have all written eloquently and authoritatively about Montaigne. I have read their pages with admiration and respect. The histories of MM. Michelet and Henri Martin have been of great use to me. I have also run through a number of purely Catholic histories and studies, and have thus been made acquainted with an amount of literary dishonesty and perverse distortion of facts which would have previously appeared to me incredible.

An enormous list might be made out of *éloges* and appreciations of Montaigne, but they rarely contain more than an attempt to characterise, in an absolute and definitive manner, a man who seems to me too vast to be reflected in the limited mirror they hold up. Besides these, there have been a series of ill-judged attempts on the part of writers more pious than critical, to rescue Montaigne from the condemnation of Pascal and Malebranche, and prove him to be an excellent Catholic. Few are content with citing the

Pilgrimage to Loretto. It seems, no doubt, more fascinating to reproduce the subtle casuistry of the Maestro del Sacro Palazzo.

But when we have read all that has been written about Montaigne—a small library in itself—we feel that, though we know multitudes of facts, the true character of the man, as we faintly conceived it when we first read the Essays, has been tampered with somewhat. The Montaigne of Pascal and Malebranche is an *esprit fort* of the seventeenth century; the Montaigne of Bayle is a gentlemanly sceptic; the Montaigne of the Voltaireans is a scoffer; the Montaigne of the Abbé Laborderie is a Capuchin Friar; the Montaigne of Mr. Emerson is Mr. Emerson himself; the Montaigne of Dr. Payen is the property of Dr. Payen; and the Montaigne of M. Grün is a Préfet of the Gironde. I have endeavoured to escape from the influence of these individual conceptions by wide excursions through the literature of the sixteenth century; and in all directions I have found materials that might be turned to immediate use. Rabelais and the *Satire Menippée;* Marot and Ronsard, and the whole Pleiad; François de Sçepeaux and Marguerite of Navarre; Pasquier and De Thou, with L'Etoile, Brantôme, d'Aubigné, Duplessis-Mornay, the Memoirs of Guise, Palma Cayet, Montluc, du Bellay, Vieilleville, the Dictionary of Verdier, the correspondence of Lipsius, the histories of Bordeaux, all contain passages more or less illustrative of the Life and Character and Literary Value of

Montaigne; and it is necessary to read all these, and many more, in order to be able to live freely in the same atmosphere with him.

A good edition of the works of Montaigne, including the Travels, was brought out some years back by Mr. Hazlitt, with a sketch of the author's life—the most complete published up to that time. I have myself commenced a translation of the Essays, with the object of seeing whether they could be made more acceptable to modern readers than they now are.

THE END.

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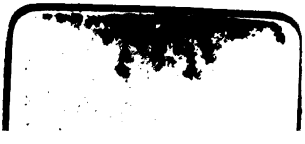
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